

VISIONARY CHURCH LEADERSHIP FOR THE
MACEDONIA AME CHURCH OF
COPE, SOUTH CAROLINA

Dennis Wilson Broughton, Jr.

Bachelor in Arts, Allen University, 2003
M Div, Payne Theological Seminary, 2008

Mentor

James T. Roberson, Jr., PhD

A FINAL PROJECT SUBMITTED TO
THE DOCTORAL STUDIES COMMITTEE
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

UNITED THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
Dayton, Ohio
May 2016

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	v
DEDICATION	ix
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER	
1. MINISTRY FOCUS	9
2. BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	33
Old Testament.....	37
New Testament.....	52
3. HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS	79
4. THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	93
5. THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS.....	116
6. PROJECT ANALYSIS.....	136
Introduction.....	136
Methodology.....	138
Implementation.....	141
Summary of Learnings.....	156
Conclusion.....	158
BIBLIOGRAPHY	169

ABSTRACT

VISIONARY CHURCH LEADERSHIP FOR THE MACEDONIA AME CHURCH OF COPE, SOUTH CAROLINA

by
Dennis Wilson Broughton, Jr.
United Theological Seminary, 2016

Mentor

James T. Roberson, Jr., PhD

This context of this project is the Macedonia AME Church Cope, South Carolina. The problem within the context is a lack of visionary leadership. Two workshops and four sermons were prepared and presented to the leadership team of Macedonia AME Church. The hypothesis is that through workshops and sermons on the need for being a visionary church, visionary church leadership will increase. Questionnaires were used to collect data in order to determine if this treatment resolved the problem. While the data collected were sparse, the analysis of these data revealed that the leadership team appropriated an understanding of visionary leadership.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work has been a long time in its conception and realization. I have had a lot of support along the way, which has helped me to bring it to fruition. Although I cannot mention everyone, I must at least name the key people who helped and encouraged me to bring this work to completion.

First of all, I want to thank The Lord for blessing me, far more than I could possibly deserve. Secondly, the persons who have been most important to my education are my father, Reverend Dennis Broughton, and my mother, Mrs. Wilhelmenia Broughton, who both never failed to encourage, inspire and challenge me to be the best student and scholar I could possibly be. Thank you mom and dad, for teaching me right from wrong, and instilling in me (and my two siblings) a love for God. They both motivated me to stay involved in church and in school when I wanted to do things which were not long term commitments to my advancement and self-betterment. Without their love and strong support, I would never have become the person I am today. I would also like to thank my older siblings Dr. Wilma Broughton and Ms. Yvette Broughton, who both supported and nurtured me throughout my childhood, teenage, and adult years.

I would never have been the person and theologian I am today without the nurturing support of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. Chief among the AME Church leaders who motivated me to continue my education was Bishop Preston Warren Williams II, who generously provided me with a scholarship to pursue the Master of Divinity degree. I would also like to thank Bishop Richard Franklin Norris, Sr., my

presiding prelate, who supported me through this journey towards the attainment of the Doctor of Ministry degree.

I also want to thank my church, Macedonia A.M.E. Church of Cope, SC for so kindly allowing me to use the church as the case study for this research project. I will be eternally grateful for their tireless effort and strong support of the workshops and sermon series which were used to do the research which allowed me to complete this work. I would also like to thank my context associate, David Thompson for taking time from his busy schedule to help me with the research, dialogue, and evaluations for this project. In addition, I would also like to express my appreciation for the ongoing encouragement and support of my peer associate, Reverend Kelvin L. Williams.

I also want to thank my mentor Dr. J. T. Roberson and his wife Beverly for their time, support, and for the love they displayed during this process. I would be remiss if I did not express my appreciation to my professional associate and former professor, Dr. William Augman, who was one of the guiding lights as I studied for the Master of Divinity degree. I cannot forget about Dr. Harold A. Hudson who played such a major role in persuading me to consider pursuing my Doctor of Ministry degree at United Theological Seminary.

Finally, I want to thank my family, especially my wife Wendy, but also my three children, Denise, Quinton, and Arnae for being in my life and never failing to provide me with the day-to-day support and encouragement I needed for this effort, but also for helping me to become a better person as a husband, a father, and an individual. And finally, although I cannot identify them by name on these pages, I also cannot forget to

express my continuing appreciation to the many friends, congregants, and classmates who encouraged me to be a scholar, theologian, and pastor.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this book to my mother, Mrs. Wilhelmenia Broughton who has nurtured and prayed for me all my formative and young adult years and who continues faithfully as ever to do so even today. In addition, I would like to attribute this book to two strong men of the AME church whose positive influence I could never overestimate: my grandfather, the late Reverend John Broughton, Sr., and my father the late Reverend Dennis W. Broughton, Jr. Finally, I would like to dedicate this work to my maternal grandparents, the late Mr. Willie and Lucy Bates who both were instrumental to my growth and development.

INTRODUCTION

In summing up how a leader can best encourage the development of an effective organizational vision, French author Antoine de Saint-Exupery once noted: “If you want to build a ship, don’t drum up the men to gather wood, divide the work and give orders. Instead, teach them to yearn for the vast and endless sea.”¹ This insight is especially applicable to vision building at Macedonia AMEC in Cope, South Carolina, where the pastor, church leaders, and the membership seek divine guidance for their effort to institute a form of visionary leadership at Macedonia which will be the most important legacy they can provide to the future of the church.

In order for Macedonia AMEC to “yearn and dream” together, for an inspired and effective vision for the future, the pastor and the leadership team must first seek the divine spark of inspiration and, led by that common inspiration, come together at the table and produce a project to conceptualize the vision. This vision must be one which accurately conceptualizes the vision that will provide Macedonia AMEC with a common, comprehensive understanding of how to move from where they are today to where they need to be in the future.

¹ Antoine de Saint-Exupery, “*Citadelle, or Wisdom of the Sands*,” Vyšehrad spol.s ro, Praha, 2002, accessed January 15, 2016, <http://www.la-grange.net/2010/12/29/saint-exupery>.

The Synergy in the visionary Leadership experience stems from the energy and insight provided by God to the minister who stands, as did the prophet, Habakkuk, as a watchman upon the wall of Jerusalem waiting for the vision which God had promised. After the pastor receives the vision, all depends upon how well he will be able to interact with church leaders and how well they will, in turn, be able to react with the church membership, in order for the vision to become reality, and in order for the synergy of the church to be effective. When the synergy of the church is most effective, as it is in many churches which follow a liberationist theology, and which take a strong social stance against oppression and dehumanization, the visionary leadership of the church extends out into the both the local and immediate community and, ultimately, into the world.

Discipleship will be the starting point with this spiritual transformation, precisely because only through the education, working together, and sharing a common interest that discipleship requires, will those who are charged with guiding the church forward be empowered to become transformed into better, and truly visionary, leaders. Effective discipleship in the church must begin with education and teaching. The particular strength of the church, the close association and common understanding of its membership, can be used to spread knowledge through discipleship, of learning the skills that a modern church requires of an effective leadership, and sharing our knowledge, within the context of normal church meetings and associations, with one another. In this manner of sharing the skills that are needed to do ministry the church can be effectively shared and the competence of church leadership will move to the next level. This kind of discipleship-centered transformation of leadership within the church can be easily seen and confirmed by looking at the growth which has taken place here in Macedonia AME

Church over the last 143 years, when through strong discipleship of a believing church, its leadership through the years has been able to bring the Church through the best and through the worse of times. Once the church seriously and purposefully reflects on where it has been, where it is now, and where it hopes to be tomorrow, then Macedonia can begin to focus on its future. This can take place because Macedonia has come this far right now by faith. According to the scripture, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the pastor and the leadership team as “believers of the faith” must have hope that through the faith which is strengthened by discipleship, they can become the visionary leaders that God is calling them to be at Macedonia AMEC .

One of the concerns about whether Macedonia will be able to continue to have the kind of visionary, disciple-centered leadership which can effectively lead the church into the future, has to do with whether or not the church has been caught up in what some have called a cycle of “comfort” which has been filtered down from generation to generation in the church. In order for change to take place the leadership team must come to a realization that there is a problem. In order to arrive at the verdict that the church has “no vision,” one must be able to compare “What is” with “What should be,” and to realize that there is a significant difference between the two. Once the leadership team comes to the realization that there is a problem, the leaders must come together collectively and come forth as a group and specifically identify the problem, which is the fact that the church lacks the vision, which is required to achieve its best future.

It is the intention of the leadership of Macedonia AME Church to participate in the project as disciples who are working together to evaluate the condition of the leadership of the church. It is also the intention of the church leadership to use the

findings and results of this Doctor of Ministry project as a framework to guide pastor and leadership team through the Visionary Leadership process. The pastor and the leadership team will explore, research, discover, and plan strategies to fulfill God's vision for the church. There will be an examination of biblical texts, schools of thought of Liberation theology, and theories of theology concerning the many facets of church leadership. This transformational process of engaged discipleship will take place through a qualitative scientific method approach. A qualitative approach will be used in the examination of the historical and social context of Macedonia AMEC. This approach can assist the pastor and the leadership team to focus on correcting the current lack of vision for the church by implementing a strategy for effective Visionary Leadership within the Leadership team.

Chapter One the Ministerial Background paper will provide the local and the broader contexts in which this exploratory study will be conducted. The immediate local context is the Macedonia AMEC of Cope, South Carolina, a small church whose formal institutional history can be traced back to between 1863-1865, the years near the conclusion or immediately after the Civil War. The broader context is the African Methodist Episcopal Church itself, a venerable institution founded by Richard Allen in 1787 when he realized how marginalized he was in the white congregation when he previously attended. The Civil War itself was an event which informs the history of all African Americans and the liberation emphasis of Black theology which was specifically fitted to guide, encourage, and ultimately liberate their people through the continued oppression which resulted from the end of the Reconstruction Era in 1877 and the return of Jim Crow and segregation. Much information is provided about the general structure

of the AME church and the demographics of Macedonia AME Church and Cope, South Carolina. This information will provide the dynamic setting in which the church will identify the need for a renewal of its vision and began to take the initial steps which will allow them to reclaim their spiritual identity through the divine medium of visionary leadership at all levels of the church.

Chapter two the Biblical Foundation paper will explore the meaning of the word vision as it is associated with the seventh century Old Testament prophet, Habakkuk who lived at the beginning of the judgement of God in the form of the foreign invasions that would scatter many of the Jewish people across the ancient world and with the New Testament Apostle Paul who, after his conversion, was chief among those responsible for spreading the gospel of the resurrected Christ across the Gentile world. In examining the peculiar way that God chose to deal with each of these leaders of his people through the agency of a vision, the chapter will examine the reasons why the prophet Habakkuk was led by God to speak these words to a people during their most challenging and oppressive time of injustice. There will also be an examination of God selected the former Saul of Tarsus who had been one of the most self-righteous and zealous of the opponents of the Christian church and transformed him from one who boasted of his justification through Mosaic law of being a “Hebrew among Hebrew” into the principle architect of building Christ’s church among the Gentile world. Both the book of Habakkuk from the Old Testament and the book of Acts from the New Testament reveal that God, himself, is the author of liberation theology in all its manifestations, stemming from his deep desire to liberate fallen man from the destitution of his expulsion from Eden and his subsequent oppression by Satan and moving against oppression in various forms, throughout human

history. When one looks at the world today, and especially the churches and communities, one can relate many of the challenges of today with those which were present during the writing of the book of Habakkuk and the conversion and ministry of Paul.

Chapter three the Historical Foundation Paper will establish a researched history of Macedonia AME Church, which will explore the early history of the church, examine the origin of its doctrines and beliefs as an African Methodist institution, and examine the progress that has been made as a result of visionary leadership since the time the church was founded, through the years of its development, and up to the present date. . And this paper will establish how the work of such eminent and visionary AME Bishops as Richard Allen, Daniel Alexander Payne, Henry M. Turner, and Frederick C. James is significant both in terms of their relationship to Macedonia AME Church and to the nation state of South Carolina.

Chapter four the Theological Foundation Paper will demonstrate how the history, experiences, and beliefs of Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church are all grounded in the theological foundation of liberation. When the founder of African Methodism, Richard Allen, was born, the men and women (blacks) in America were an oppressed and marginalized community of people ostracized by the institutionalized means of slavery, racism, and social injustice.

Chapter five, the Theoretical Foundation Paper examines the methodology which was employed in the action research process of this project. The anticipated outcome of the action research process will be a transformation in the leadership team at Macedonia AME Church which will become empowered through discipleship, planning, and

education to become more spiritually conscious of its purpose for existence, recognize its present state, arrive at an understanding of its desired future state, and reach an actionable consensus for how to move from the present reality to the future goal. The pastor and laity must accomplish this significant transformation over time and both on a personal and organizational level. They must do an introspective investigation of themselves and raise “pointed” questions, such as for example, “What is my purpose at Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church? What part of the vision for Macedonia does God want me to fulfill?” After examining themselves personally, they must also explore, in an organizational and corporate sense, the reason for the existence of the church. By looking at the purpose for existence personally and organizationally, the pastor and laity can come to a conclusion what are the problems at the church.

Chapter six, Project Analysis will examine how the pastor and the leadership team at Macedonia AMEC examined Visionary Leadership from the perspective of a wide and deep angle lenses. An analysis of the outcomes which arose as a result of the study of the historical, social, and strategic behavior of Macedonia leadership team will be performed through a series of two workshops and a series of four interrelated sermons.

The data collection will assist the pastor and leadership team in its examination of the concept of “Visionary Leadership,” both more concretely and more holistically. More specifically, the leadership team will be able to identify patterns, categories, and themes that are appropriate and necessary in the developmental process of planning a vision.

Also this data, and the information gained through a thorough and complete analysis, helped the pastor and the leadership team develop an in-depth understanding of

the respondent's viewpoint based on the collected data from the church as a whole, and... more importantly, make use of the knowledge gained to formulate a plan to move the church forward towards visionary leadership at all levels, including all ministries, organizations and auxiliaries.

This plan must be compelling, attractive, credible, and realistic if the church is going to move forward. In order for this to take place the leadership team not make decisions concerning the spiritual vision for Macedonia based primarily on their individual personal, perceptions, and experiences. Instead, the pastor and church leaders and members must permit themselves to be empowered to make consensus decisions which reflect the unique significance and importance of the revealed will of God insofar as his vision for the church is concerned. This idea is born out of a deep belief that God's vision can reign if the leadership team at Macedonia AME Church will look into the future of the church collectively as "Visionary Leaders."

At the center of this effort, God is working through the heart, spirit, and mind of the pastor, and the pastor in turn is leading the leadership team to embrace God's vision for the Macedonia AME Church as visionary leaders. Without effective leadership by the pastor and the leadership team the vision will not manifest. Therefore, issues that make up effective vision casting on part of the pastor and leadership team are important part of the visionary leadership development process.

CHAPTER ONE

MINISTRY FOCUS

The ministry focus for this project is the Macedonia AME Church of Cope, South Carolina. This section of the document will give a general overview of the African Methodist Episcopal Church followed by the specifics of the Macedonia AMEC located on 118 Second St, Cope, SC.

The Macedonia AME Church has a rich history in the larger African Methodist Episcopal Church, founded by Bishop Richard Allen in 1787.¹

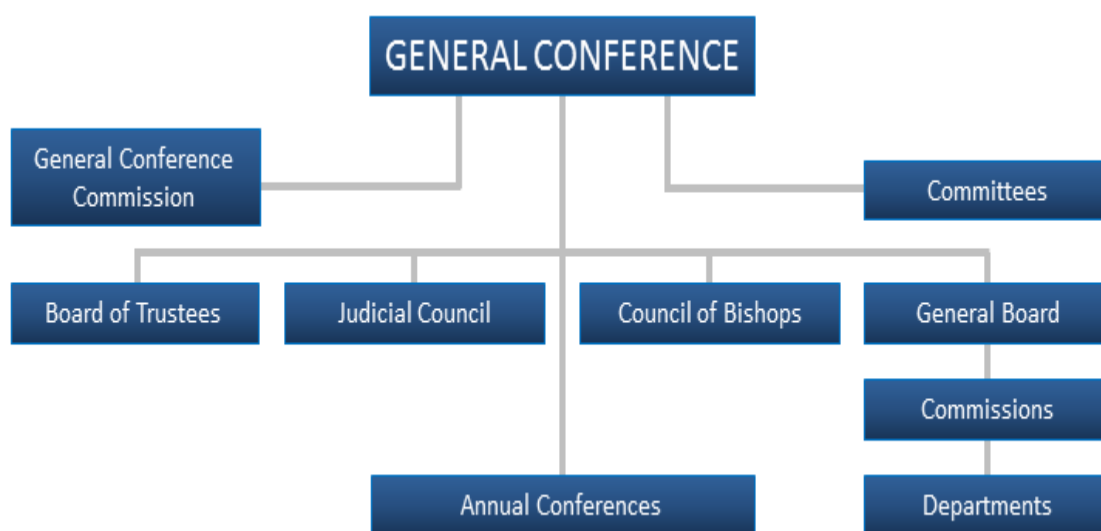
The African Methodist Episcopal Church is a connectional organization. Each local church is a part of the larger connection. The Bishops are the Chief Officers of the Connectional Organization. They are elected for life by a majority vote of the General Conference which meets every four years. Bishops are bound by the laws of the church to retire upon the General Conference nearest their 75th birthday.

Presiding Elders are the assistants, like middle management, whom the Bishops appoint to supervise the preachers in a Presiding Elder's District. A Presiding Elder District is one portion of an Annual Conference, which in turn is one part of the Episcopal District over which a Bishop presides. In the Presiding Elder District, the appointed Presiding Elder meets with the local churches that comprise the District, at least once every three months for a Quarterly Conference. The Presiding Elder also presides over a District Conference and a Sunday School Convention in his or her

¹ Official Website: African Methodist Episcopal Church, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://ame-church.com/our-church/our-structure>.

District. At the end of an Annual Conference year, the Presiding Elder reports to the Bishop at the Annual Conference and makes recommendations for pastoral appointments.

Pastors receive a yearly appointment to a charge (church), on the recommendation of the Presiding Elder and with the approval and final appointment of the Bishop. The pastor is in full charge of the Church and is an ex-official member of all boards, organizations and clubs of that Church.



General Conference Organization Chart

1) THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

The General Conference is the supreme body of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. It is composed of the Bishops, as ex-officio presidents, according to the rank of election, and an equal number of ministerial and lay delegates, elected by each of the Annual Conferences and the Lay Electoral Colleges of the Annual Conferences. Other ex-officio members are: the General Officers, College Presidents, Deans/Presidents of Theological Seminaries; Chaplains in the Regular Armed Forces of the U.S.A. The General

Conference meets quadrennially (every four years), but may have extra sessions in certain emergencies.

2) COUNCIL OF BISHOPS

The Council of Bishops is the Executive Branch of the Connectional Church. It has the general oversight of the Church during the interim of General Conferences. The Council of Bishops meet annually at such time and place as the majority of the Council determine and also at such other times as may be deemed necessary in the discharging its responsibility as the Executive Branch of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The Council of Bishops hold at least two public sessions at each annual meeting. At the first, complaints and petitions against a Bishop is heard, at the second, the decisions of the Council are made public. All decisions must be in writing.

3) BOARD OF INCORPORATORS

The Board of Incorporators, also known as the General Board of Trustees, has the supervision, In Trust, of all Connectional property of the Church and is vested with authority to act in behalf of the Connectional Church wherever necessary.

4) THE GENERAL BOARD

The General Board is in many respects the administrative body and is comprised of various departmental Commissions made up of the respective Executive-Director, the General Secretary of the AME Church, the Chief Financial Officer, the members of

the various Commissions, and one Bishop as presiding officer with the other Bishops associating.

5) JUDICIAL COUNCIL

The Judicial Council is the highest judicatory body of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. It is an appellate court, elected by the General Conference, and is amenable to it.

The AME church is composed of twenty episcopal districts. The districts, taken from the AME website are as follows:

First District: Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Western New York, New England, Philadelphia, and Bermuda.

Second District: Baltimore, North Carolina, Washington DC, Western North Carolina and Virginia.

Third District: Ohio, West Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

Fourth District: Nova Scotia, Ontario, Quebec, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wisconsin and India.

Fifth District: Alaska Arizona, California, Idaho, Kansas. Missouri, Montana, Oregon, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, Washington and Wyoming.

Sixth District: Georgia.

Seventh District: South Carolina.

Eight District Louisiana and Mississippi.

Ninth District: Alabama.

Tenth District: Texas.

Eleventh District: Bahamas and Florida.

Twelfth District: Arkansas and Oklahoma.

Thirteenth District: Tennessee and Kentucky

Fourteenth District: Liberia, Serra Leone, Ghana, Cote D'Ivoire, and Togo-Benin.

Fifteenth District: Angola, Cape, Eastern Cape, Kalahari, Namibia, Queenstown.

Sixteenth District: South America, Caribbean, Windward Islands, Europe (Cuba).

Seventeenth District: Zambia, Zambezi, Congo Brazzaville, Katanga, Kananga, Kinshasa.

Eighteenth District: Lesotho, Swaziland, Botswana, Mozambique and Northeast Lesotho.

Nineteenth District: South African Provinces of Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal.

Twentieth District: Malawi, Zimbabwe.²

The Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church

The Macedonia AME Church is located in the Seventh Episcopal District, which consists of six annual conferences that are held in geographical locations throughout the state of South Carolina. The district is under the leadership of the Right Reverend Richard Franklin Norris, Sr. The Seventh Episcopal District is composed of more than 600 churches, which participate in six Annual Conferences. There are seventeen local districts within the Seventh Episcopal District. Each local district is under the leadership

² Official Website of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. AME History, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://ame-church.com/our-church/our-structure>.

of a Presiding Elder. The Macedonia AME Church is in the Orangeburg district of the Central Conference of the Seventh Episcopal District and under the leadership of Presiding Elder L. T. Baker.

The Macedonia AME Church is located on 118 Second Street in Cope, South Carolina. Macedonia was established under the leadership of Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne, the founding bishop of South Carolina Conference. On Monday morning, May 16, 1865, Bishop Payne organized the South Carolina Conference in the colored Presbyterian Church already designated.³ In 1865, the South Carolina Conference was an episcopal district of three states: North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Today, South Carolina has its own district named the Seventh Episcopal District of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which has 20 Episcopal Districts worldwide. The membership of the organization extends over 2 million. There are many thousands of churches in the organization. The churches are all in an episcopal district and fall under a conference within the episcopal district. Each conference is composed of two or more local districts within the boundary region of the conference.

Bishop Norris, the presiding prelate of the Seventh Episcopal District of which Macedonia AME Church is a member, oversees over 600 churches in six conferences that are composed of seventeen local districts with a membership of over 300,000. All of the local districts are governed by a presiding elder, who serves as an assistant to Bishop Norris. For example, Macedonia AME Church is in the Central Conference, which

³ Daniel Payne, A. *The History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union/ Legacy Publishing, 1998), 469.

consists of the Orangeburg, Wateree, and Manning Districts. Macedonia AMEC is in the Orangeburg District where the Reverend L.T. Baker, is the presiding elder.

The community in which Macedonia AMEC finds is geographically located, is rural and it is in the Orangeburg District because it is in the town of Cope, SC. According to sources,

Cope is located in Orangeburg County, southwest of the city of Orangeburg. It was named after Jacob Martin Cope, a Barnwell County farmer who in the 1890s sold a portion of his land for the town and train depot. Within a year or two, Cope had two churches, several shops, a gristmill, cotton gin, and a planning mill – proof of how essential railroads were to growth in this area of the state. Cope train depot still stand and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Orangeburg is the largest city near cope.⁴

Macedonia AMEC is one of the ten buildings that are located in the town of Cope. The ethnic demographics of Cope is 57% white, 40.3% black and 2.6% persons of two or more races. The town of Cope has three churches: Sanctified Church, Cope Baptist Church, and Macedonia AMEC.⁵ The pastors and members of all three of these churches participate in town events such as parades, picnics, and programs. These churches also participate in combined worship services on various occasions throughout the Liturgical calendar year, such as combined New Year's Eve and Sunrise Easter services and winter, spring, summer, and fall revivals. These traditions have been created and historically supported by the pastors and membership of the three churches over the years.

Macedonia AMEC is located in a rural and agricultural area. The town of Cope is a major hub for growing, processing, and shipping cotton and, consequently, when one

⁴ South Carolina's Information Highway: Cope Depot – Cope South Carolina, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://www.sciway.net/city/cope.html>.

⁵ Cope South Carolina, accessed November 15, 2015, www.city-data.com/city/Cope-South-Carolina.html.

enters the town of Cope, one will see cotton along almost all of the main roads.

Macedonia AMEC is literally surrounded by cotton fields. Second Street where the church sits on is adjacent to Cotton Avenue. Cotton continues to be a major source of income for the majority of the people who live in the community. Historically, many of the ancestors of the current residents worked closely with the owners of the land, businesses, and operators of the companies. For example, Valentine's Cotton, which is one of the oldest companies in the area that stills gin cotton, provide employment for many of the town residents, who are basically all related members of the same large family members.

In addition to cotton, Cope also has other forms of farming as well including goat fields, cow pastures, and tilapia and horse farms. Cope, SC also affords an in town nature trail which is always well maintained, decorated and carefully manicured. The town park is located right behind the Macedonia AMEC building. Cope also has other simple quality of life amenities such as a public basketball court, picnic areas,, a town general store, a post office facility, and a fire department, which is unusual for a town the size of Cope. One of the major meeting places in Cope is the Orangeburg Consolidated District Building. The district office for Orangeburg Consolidated District Four office is located in town and provides employment for many of the residents.

In looking at the history of Macedonia AMEC, one will not find in the story of this small rural church, the same clear milestones and historical lines that one typically sees when looking at the more elaborate history, discipline, and order of many of the larger and more prosperous AME churches located in larger cities or of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. One cannot forget how during the era of slavery when it was illegal

for slaves to assemble without white supervision, the black church had to go underground to worship. Despite the drawbacks of being such a small church in a rural area, one thing that Macedonia has historically had in common with its fellow churches was its fulfillment of its mission to be a refuge of hope, home for the homeless, a school for the un-educated, a feeder of the hungry, a clothier for the unclothed, and a place of empowerment for the powerless. This institution of worship allowed people of color to use the church as agent of freedom, change, and transformation..

Macedonia is a 143 year old church with a rich history. The mission for the church is to educate, liberate the minds and souls of all who entered the sacred doors of the church. The church has a long history that dates back to the late 1800's, which was era in which records and factual information, were not safely kept in chronological order. Much of the history of the church comes from such sources as court house records and through the oral tradition, principally through the recollected experiences of some of the older historians of the church and the community.

The membership of Macedonia AMEC is largely all members of one extended biological family which has lived in the area for several generations. The ancestors of the membership, the sharecroppers who originally built the church, were all born in Cope, South Carolina and worked for the owner/farmers who make up the remainder of the population of the Cope community. The church and the community are inseparable because both are so small that they both involve the same people. In fact, many of the members live within a one mile radius of the church. Some of the members live right next door to the church, across the street, and "down the road "as some of the members would put it. In a small community like Cope, it is not surprising that the church would

become almost like a second home to the members. That is why much of the history of Macedonia comes from the oral tradition.

According to Sisters Vermell Stevenson, Carolyn Jennings, Alice Johnson, Brothers Charlie Green, Eddie Rivers, Harvey Boneparte, and Timmerson Johnson, Macedonia AMEC when it was first built in the late 1800s, originally stood about one hundred yards from its present location. It was a large wooden structure with separate outside toilets for men and women located directly behind the church; a wooden house located to the left of the church building served as the church parsonage. After many years the church and the parsonage became run down and in poor condition, the stewards and the trustees decided to tear down the old church and parsonage and rebuild the church. A member of the church loaned his tractor to the church, and all the able men assisted in the demolition of the old church and the former parsonage. The women provided support for the workers. There is no exact date but this took place on a Saturday.

According to Sister Annette Ryant, when they were tearing down the church she and other ladies were concerned about the general safety of the men who were involved in the demolition and the preservation of the church bell, which could have easily been damaged if handled improperly. Fortunately, neither the bell nor the men suffered any injury, and after the bell was safely removed from the bell tower, it was pulled to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Spell for storage, during which time it was decided to load it into the trunk of Rev. Washington's car and taken to be cleaned. Mrs. Ryant cannot recall who brought the bell back, but the same historic bell has been preserved though the years and sits immediately in front of the church building today.

After the destruction of the wooden structure, services were held for a time in the homes of members such as Brother James York and Sister Ruth Sumpter, until the congregation was able to purchase additional lots on which to rebuild a new church. According to court records, the land belonging to Macedonia was purchased on July 12, 1920, from T.M Stuckey, M.D. and Aline Kearse Stuckey. The land was sold to the following trustees members: Brothers George Bowman, Lawson Graves, Wade Hampton, John Brown, Robert Connor, Simeal Conner and George Salley. The deed was signed and sealed by E. .E. Ritter, Notary Public of the State of South Carolina.

Construction of the new church which stands as a place of worship today, began around 1965. Several dedicated members were responsible for building this sanctuary, including the ladies who prepared meals while the men were working on the church. Sister Vermell Stevenson recalls that when the men were holding up the walls by hand and how fearful she was that the structure might fall on them. Even the children were involved in making the church what it is today. Timmerson Johnson remembers going door to door with his grandfather Bossie Argrow collecting money from family members and friends to help buy material to build the church. During this particular time, the church was a circuit church which held services only on alternating Sundays and shared a pastor with Good Hope African Methodist Episcopal Church until the members and the community saw the growing need to keep the doors of both churches open every Sunday instead of two Sundays a month at each church. This decision created a full time pastoral position at each of the churches. When a full time pastor was appointed to Macedonia AMEC in 1994, Macedonia was officially removed from the roster of South Carolina AME circuit churches.

Throughout years the church has had the good fortune to have in its membership number of devoted members that gave their time and service in the areas of stewardship, trusteeship, class leadership, and various other positions in the church. After rebuilding the original church in 1965, in 1999, Macedonia added a new fellowship hall, kitchen, and pastor's office. In addition, the sanctuary was significantly rehabbed and restructured, and vinyl siding was added to the outside of the entire church facility.

Through the years, Macedonia has been the recipient of many gifts from generous people outside of the church who have made donations to help advance the mission of Macedonia. In 2004, Mr. Jaime Smith and his family donated a van to the church. In 2005, when the church was about to purchase new land for burial through South Carolina Bank and Trust, Mr. and Mrs. Johelen Riley donated two acres of land to the church, to be used for the new cemetery. In 2006, because of generous external gifts, Macedonia was able to erect a fence around the entire two acres of the new cemetery. Other external donations allowed the church to purchase a new copier, computer and printer as well as new furniture for the sitting area and the main area of the fellowship hall and for the pastor's office.

In 2007, Steedly Monument donated a beautiful marker to be placed at the church new cemetery and a PA system to the church. In 2008, the members of Macedonia successfully raised the funds needed to install stained glass windows and purchase new doors with dead bolt locks. In 2011, the fellowship hall was repainted, the church van was repainted, and new tables and chairs were purchased for the fellowship hall. In the current year, with the assistance of the cemetery committee and the Gospel choir Macedonia was able to purchase a utility shed with a garage.

The majority of Macedonia's membership is economically classified by the US Census as low to moderate income. Many of the members rely on some combination of social security and/or retirement. Those who are employed work for local industries that mandate a minimum of thirty years before full retirement is possible. Since the majority of the employed members of the church usually work swing shifts jobs, their schedules are subject to change each week. Some of Macedonia's membership has indicated that the irregularity of their work schedules is a major reason they cannot attend regular church services and other church activities on a regular basis. Unfortunately, this irregular attendance on the part of adult church members has had a negative chain reaction on the youth, who also tend to have poor church attendance. Finding a way to structure church ministries in such a way as to accommodate those who must work for a living is one of the challenges which Macedonia AMEC hopes that visionary leadership will help to resolve, through the creation of new, more flexible ministries which will be expounded on later.

Today Macedonia has one hundred and eighty members on the official church roster, which needs to be up-dated and purged to account for the twenty to thirty percent of the members who have died, moved out of the area, or attend other churches. On an average Sunday, the attendance at Macedonia AMEC can range between eighty to one hundred and twenty members. Demographically, the church has a majority of women and children, with adult males well in the minority. According to the church quarterly conference records, about sixty-five of Macedonia's active members are registered voters, which means that they are above the age of eighteen and meet all other requirements for voting in the State of South Carolina. We have approximately fifty

children between the ages of two months to eighteen years of age. Others who would continue on our roster, even after a purge, for a variety of reasons, including work schedules, no longer come to church on a regular basis, although they frequently attend holiday services, funerals, or special programs.

Demographically, Macedonia's population consists of approximately fifty percent adult women and about twenty percent adult men. The remaining thirty percent of church membership consists of children and young people. The percentage of church members [residents] who live in the immediate vicinity of Cope, South Carolina is about ninety percent, and the percentage of those who travel thirty or more miles [nonresidents] is about ten percent. The percentage of inactive members is about thirty percent. One of the primary goals of the ministry at Macedonia is to return to active membership the thirty percent of members on the inactive members list who are no longer attending church or participating in regular church activities. Any significant improvement in the reactivation rate of inactive members will provide a more accurate analysis of the demographics provided above.

The membership of Macedonia can be described as Afrocentric and derived from a spiritual liberating background. Church members are a communal people who are philosophically and ethically committed to a doctrine of helping one another which is a natural exponent of their shared background of hope, love, hardship, and struggle. While believing in more positive outcomes in the future than those which have been historically experienced in the past or present, the members have a strong practical sense that self-betterment is possible and that even in the worse of times of hardship and struggle, it is always the redemptive power of unconditional love and the enduring personal, family,

and communal values in which they are solidly grounded that allow them to live reasonably happy lives, raise their families, and build their church and community.

Many of the families in the area are multi-generational, with grand and great grandparents raising the children of the family. As time passes, this relationship between the young and old goes full circle and becomes symbiotic as the children, grand, and great-great grandchildren end up taking care of the parents and grandparents as well. One of the results of the perpetuation of this type of multi-generational relationship is having younger grandchildren and great grandchildren who never venture out into the larger world beyond their small community which can offer them greater economic rewards. This means that those who remain at home have their earning capacity severely limited by the low income jobs which are the only jobs available in the local community.

Not only do the low income jobs available in the local community limit the earning power of young people, but it often interferes with their decisions about continuing their education. For many of those who complete high school, the choice is between getting a job which will take care of their immediate needs rather than enrolling in a college level program which will prepare them to earn a higher salary in the future.. The mind set in the area is to complete a high school diploma, and then either get a job immediately or go in the military to gain experience and to earn money for school. Going directly from high school to college is not a pathway open to the majority of the young people because their families simply cannot afford to send them. Many of the local parents or grandparents do not have the financial resources needed to pay for a college education or even the collateral required to take out higher education loans. As the result of the lack of access to higher education for most community high school

graduates, the percentage of college graduates who are members of the church is about fifteen percent. While some college graduates are active in the church, none holds a major position.

One of the strengths of the church is the degree to which members are willing to give their time, commitment, and services to the church and its programs. The ministries at the church provide an individual, wholesome community, family oriented worship that allows each member to engage in some significant aspect of worship, including an active Church School which has primary, intermediate, and adult classes. The Church School is directed by a church school Superintendent and a Christian Education Director. To augment the Church School and to accomplish other aspects of the mission of the church, we also have a public relations director and a media center.

There are various ministries at the church such as “Young Saved and Loving It” ministry (YSL), the Men of Macedonia (MOM) ministry, Women’s Missionary Society (WMS), Sons of Allen (SOA), Macedonia Little Stars, Distress Fund, and the Pulpit Aid. Stewards, trustees, class leaders, and other church officers and leaders are assigned to all the auxiliaries and boards. The Stewards and trustees are the governing boards of the church.

Macedonia AMEC has a total of fifteen senior stewards who are traditionally drawn from older and more experienced members, and fifteen junior stewards drawn from the younger members. The role of the steward is to serve the needs of the pastor and the church, and ceremonially, to prepare the communion table and assist the pastor in the distribution of this sacrament. Stewards also represent the church in negotiating the salary and benefits of the pastor. The benefits include, but are not limited to: pension or

retirement, insurances: health, disability, professional liability, key person life insurance; self-employment tax; parsonage or housing allowance; continuing education; travel; connectional, episcopal district, conference, inner parish, and all other expenses related to official duties.⁶

Stewards are also responsible for identifying the needy and the distressed in the church and in the community and to use appropriate church resources to relieve and comfort them. The stewards make accurate reports of every expenditure of money, whether to the pastor, church, sick or poor. They shall attend committee meetings for the disbursing of money to churches and give counsel in matters of arbitration. They also keep account of the baptisms, marriages, and deaths within the congregation.⁷ At Macedonia, the pastor maintained a generally good relationship with the stewards of the church, but felt that at times there were minor areas of disagreement with both the stewards and the junior stewards.

Macedonia also has fifteen Senior Trustees and seven Junior Trustees. Church trustees are charged with managing all the temporal concerns of the church. They shall guard for the Connection all real estate of the church, parsonage or any other property of the local church.⁸ The trustees are in charge of making all arrangements for improvements of the property or real estate of the church when authorized by a majority of the legal members of the church. They secure, by purchase or hire, a house for the

⁶ African Methodist Episcopal Church, *2012 The Doctrine and Discipline of The African Methodist Episcopal Church* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2012), 62.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid., 65.

pastor's family and also comfortably furnish it. In lieu of this arrangement, the pastor may elect to accept a housing allowance which he will use to make his own housing arrangements. The trustees are also in charge of ensuring the payment of the moving expenses for the pastor and family to the Cope area from their previous assignment.⁹

In assessing the stewards and trustees of the church, many of whom were in place long before he arrived, the Macedonia pastor feels strongly that there are some mismatches on these boards which, he believes, will ultimately work against the development of visionary leadership in the church. He is particularly interested in seeing some of the older trustees and stewards who have been in office for twenty to forty years agree to move on to Emeritus status. This would allow some of the younger, more vigorous members, who are also much more accepting of change, to have an opportunity to serve in more of the top leadership positions at Macedonia.

The pastor also feels that while all of the present stewards perform their duties in an excellent fashion, he does not feel that all of them would be able to maintain that standard under the more rigorous requirements that would be instituted under a church-wide plan for developing visionary leadership. These individuals lack the strategic perspective which is necessary for the implementation of visionary leadership at all levels at Macedonia. Many of them are so set in their ways that it seems highly unlikely that they will be willing or able to make the changes that will be necessary in order for them to continue to perform at maximal levels that the church will require as it begins the

⁹ Ibid.

process of transformative discipleship which will usher in a new era of informed, strategic, and visionary leadership.

The Visionary Problem at Macedonia

The leaders of the organizations and auxiliaries of the church have gotten in a comfort zone where they are either afraid to serve or simply are not willing to be accountable for the expanded scope of work that will be required under a more strategic system of discipleship. One of the ways that this problem will be addressed at Macedonia AMEC will be through the provision of ongoing and intensive leadership training which will be strongly based on a Problem/Solution approach to meeting the challenges facing Macedonia AMEC both today and in the future. Leaders must learn to ask questions such as “Where should the church be in one year? Or in five years? Or in ten years? What are the specific steps we will need to take in order to achieve these goals? How do we prioritize the specific tasks which we must do so that important, foundational tasks are completed first, and less important tasks are done later? How must we manage our budgeting to finance the ongoing transformation of the leadership style of Macedonia AMEC to a style of visionary leadership?. Macedonia AMEC has reached a point in its history where it is imperative that an inspired and shared vision be in place in order for the church to prosper.

The pastor of Macedonia AMEC feels that the church has the right mix of people that will be needed to begin the work of creating an environment which will foster the growth of visionary leadership, but as he puts it “Some of them are not in the right

positions to be used to their fullest potential to serve the needs of the church, people, and community.”

Analysis of the data collected during this project revealed that one of the major weaknesses of the church is the need for additional education at all levels about all the major aspects of church leadership in general and visionary leadership in particular. The majority of the members of Macedonia AMEC do not so much oppose visionary leadership, as much as they are indifferent to the concepts of mission and strategic planning which accompany any realization of visionary leadership. Many of the members of Macedonia have become comfortable and familiar with the way things currently are at the church and see little reason to “rock the boat.” To some, no doubt, the processes related to the achievement of visionary leadership will likely seem much too scientific and calculated, and too much in opposition to their more submission stance that the church of Christ should “wait on the Lord” rather than gird up its loins for the battle for continued relevance in the modern world. These members clearly do not fully understand that every process involved in the transformation of Macedonia to a church blessed by visionary leadership, comes from God and can be fully supported by scripture.

Part of the problem is that never before has the church been called to raise critical and pointed questions about the adequacy of its vision. At Macedonia, the present mind set of most members is about who holds which position of leadership and influence in the Church. Little thought seems devoted to the fact that far too many of the duties of those who are currently in positions of leadership, are not being fulfilled, which is possible only because the church currently lacks a discipleship based, understanding of visionary leadership.

Unfortunately, visionary leadership is not an operating mechanism at Macedonia. The majority of the leaders, who hold leadership positions in the church, are between the ages of fifty-five to seventy-five years of age and are comfortable with the present context of the church. Because the majority of these individuals are comfortable with things as they are, are not remotely interested in visioning new ideas for the church, and, in fact, have rejected those opportunities that have been offered for positive change, the inevitable result has been the fostering of a culture of complacency, neglect and incompetency at critical levels of church leadership. `

The negligence is taking place because the officers have placed more importance on maintaining the status quo and holding on to the leadership positions of power in which many of them have operated ineffectively, than on the critica need for a broader discipleship-based, visionary leadership which will better position the church to meet the strategic challenges of the present and the future. To these members who are set hopelessly in their ways, new ideas and events are viewed as so wholly unneeded and unwelcome that there is little wonder that this strong opposition to positive change, has filtered down throughout the congregation who, while not uninterested in the future of the church, seem totally unaware of the challenges the church must face in the future.

At the present, Macedonia AMEC leaders are operating on a twenty to eighty percent percentile, which means that in terms of all church operations, twenty percent of the senior officers are doing the work while eighty percent of the senior officers are merely holding titles. The goal of this project is to take this committed twenty percent and form a leadership team committed to learning about different practices of leadership,

especially visionary leadership. The process will include a series of workshops, sermons, and training in visionary leadership.

The members of Macedonia AMEC Leadership team are as follows:

- Steward Protem
- Trustee Protem
- Financial Director
- Financial Secretary
- Women Missionary Society President
- Young People Department President
- Church School Superintendent
- Christian Education Director
- Class Leader Director
- Church Secretary
- Sons of Allen President
- Usher Board President
- Gospel Choir President
- Senior Choir President
- Men Of Macedonia President
- Pulpit Aid President

The Leadership team will explore the interaction of transformation learning theory. According to “*The Handbook of Transformation Learning*,”

The center of transformative learning theory is the notion that we uncritically assimilate our values, beliefs, and assumptions from our family, community, culture. In other words, we adopt the dominant ideology as the normal and

natural way to think and act. When we are able to recognize that these beliefs are oppressive and not in our best interests, we can enter into a transformation learning process.¹⁰

The leadership team must channel their energy on a new and amore strategic vision for the church and on enhancing their capacities to provide better and more effective service in regards to organization, auxiliary, church, and community. Ultimately, these strategic improvements will allow the membership to engage more fully in corporate ministry as active participants in the visionary leadership process.

Through discipleship, this transformative leadership team must seek the blessing of visionary leadership plan for kingdom building at Macedonia AMEC. One of the first fruit of visionary leadership will be to enlighten, educate, and explicate the vision in such clear and positive and logical terms that it will change old mind sets, introduce new concepts about leadership, and explore new ministries. For all of this transformation to take place, a teaching mechanism must be put in place to facilitate the achievement of the vision. The vision must be communal in it manifestation, so that every member of the church will have the opportunity to serve and participate in the various existing and emerging ministries which will all operate on the principle that the church is a place where everybody is somebody, and where God is in charge of all. Traditions must never be allowed to supersede or hinder God's vision for new and more vibrant ministry, worship and praise.

¹⁰ W. Taylor, P. Cranston & Associates, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice* (San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 7.

A vision for the church is only an idea or image of the future for the organization, but the inspired vision for the church is an idea of a more desirable future for the organization which is so energizing that it in effect jump starts the future by calling forth the discipleship skills, talents, and resources that will compel the future to happen.¹¹ By operating with a concept of “vision” the leadership team will be in a position to explore new solutions for recurring problems which have long gone unresolved in the past. Also, with an “inspired vision” the leadership team will have an inexplicable willingness and eagerness to learn, examine, and study new ideas, concepts, and objectives to enhance the leadership, mission, vision, and purpose for Macedonia AMEC.

¹¹ Burt Nanus, *Visionary Leadership* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 8.

CHAPTER TWO

BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter will focus on the biblical foundations of the concept of visionary leadership and examine how this concept is grounded in Old and New Testament scripture from which it draws both its spiritual authenticity and its place in the liberation theology tradition of the church. This chapter will also focus on the liberationist elements which exist thematically and as historical context in both testaments as a natural response to the constant presence of oppression in human history. Additionally, this chapter will examine the key elements of the response of the people of God as they responded to oppression by developing a liberation theology which draws upon the dehumanizing aspects of oppression in a variety of historical contexts, including the context of the African Methodist church, as a motivating and rallying force for survival.

The two biblical characters that I have chosen for this examination of biblical foundations of Visionary Leadership are the Prophet Habakkuk, a minor prophet who lived at the time of the Babylonian invasion of Jerusalem [circa 598 BC] ¹from the Old Testament and the Apostle Paul whose conversion [circa 31-3c BC] ²and subsequent epistolary New Testament writing had a profound effect on the spread of Christianity

¹ Charles Laymon, *Interpreters Concise Commentary, Volume 3, The Minor Prophets and the Apocrypha*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1971), 3.

² Ibid., *Volume 7, Acts and the Letters of Paul*, 114.

throughout the ancient world. We will look closely at the particular place on the continuum of visionary leadership each of these individuals occupies in terms of how each was shaped through the visionary experience and how each was able to share that experience with their respective congregations as a pattern and guideline for liberating Christian action against either the Babylonian oppression in the case of Habakkuk or the dehumanization of the early Christians at the hands of Saul of Tarsus.

Consistency Between Old and New Testament

Before going further, it will probably serve us well in this discussion to establish the consistency between the Old and New Testaments which produced Habakkuk and Paul respectively and between the Old and New Testament conceptions of prophecy and how prophecy is related to the visionary experience. This can be done by looking at the way that Jesus confirmed the importance and authenticity of the Old Testament to explicate important elements of the New Testament and most particularly, his own standing as the long prophesized and awaited Messiah of the Old Testament come in the flesh, where, “. . .being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phillipians 2:8).

Even after his death and resurrection, in speaking to certain of the disciples and the women who came to his sepulcher to seek the risen Lord, Jesus makes specific reference to the visionary revelations and teachings of the prophets of the Old Testament to explain and spiritually authenticate his preordained role as the New Testament Messiah, who insisted on the consistency and perfect union of the Old and New Testaments by “beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the

Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27). In support of consistency between the Old and New Testaments, Jesus also said, ““These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.’ And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures” (Luke 24:44-45).

This consistency between the Old and New Testament can also be established in the teachings of the Apostle Paul, who held that “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.” (2 Timothy 3:16). In this pronouncement, while Paul is referring to the revealed knowledge provided to himself and other writers of the New Testament, as a former devout member of the Jewish faith, his is most certainly referring to the 39 books of the Old Testament of which the 17 books of the major and minor Prophets are unquestionably an essential part. Likewise, the biblical consistency of the visions of Habakkuk and Paul are both explicitly and implicitly contained within the strikingly similar social context of oppression and dehumanization of the people of God which marked the historical eras in which each of them lived and during which they each were divinely selected and commissioned to provide visionary leadership. The religious and spiritual doctrines of both Habakkuk and Paul are based upon early historical forms of what today is called a liberation theology, which focuses in Habakkuk’s case on the survival of the people of Israel and in Paul’s case on the survival and expansion of the newly emerging Christian faith. *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary* makes the following observation concerning the scriptural and doctrinal relationships between the visionary experiences of Habakkuk and Paul.

In addition, it makes the significant point that both are also equal precursors to the presentation and ultimate fulfillment of the gospel of Christ.³ Which, in strictly Christocentric terms, was central not only to the prophetic times of Habakkuk and the post resurrection times of Paul, but even before the foundation of the world, as the scripture, itself, suggests, in the well-known first verse of the first chapter of the Gospel of John, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”(John 1:1)

To establish more firmly the relationship between both the Old and the New Testament and the relationship between the visionary leadership of the prophet Habakkuk and the Apostle Paul, it is necessary to look at what Clarence Larkin, pastor, Bible teacher and author who wrote extensively on Dispensationalism, has called a “type.” A “type” is defined as a person, event, or ceremony which is recorded to “foreshadow: some future person, event, or ceremony. As Larkin explains,

You cannot understand [the book of] Leviticus without [the book of] Hebrews, or [the book of] Daniel without [the book of] Revelation, or the Passover, or Isaiah 53 without the Gospel account of the Crucifixion. The value of the study of the “Types” and “Antitypes” is the proof they furnish of the Inspiration of the Scriptures. Their study proves beyond question that the Scriptures had but one author—the HOLY SPIRIT”⁴

Larkin uses the scripture to further his support of the validity of the concept of biblical typography by noting that when Jesus say, “Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth

³ Ronald Youngblood, *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary, New and Enhanced Edition* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2014), 493.

⁴ Clarence Larkin, *Dispensational Truth of God’s Plan and Purpose in the Ages* (Philadelphia, PA: Rev. Clarence Larkin Publishing, 1920), 157.

forth out of his treasure things new and old”(Matthew 13:52), the “old” treasures represent the Old Testament and the “new” treasures represent the New Testament.

This harmonic relationship can be extended also to the relationship between Habakkuk and the Prophets of the Old Testament and Paul and the Apostles of the New Testament. In fact, on at least three occasions in his epistles [Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38,], the Apostle Paul quotes directly from the book of Habakkuk, [Habakkuk 2:4] that the just man, because of his faith, shall live, as confirmation of the Pauline doctrine that man receives justification and eternal life through faith

Further, the biblical doctrines embraced by Habakkuk, through the agency of the Apostle Paul can also be said to have affected the Protestant Reformation,’

The Protestant Reformation under Martin Luther was influenced by the Book of Habakkuk. Luther’s discovery of the biblical doctrine that the just shall live by faith came from his study of the apostle Paul’s beliefs in the Books of Romans and Galatians. But Paul’s famous declaration, ‘The just shall live by faith’ (Rom 1:17), is a direct quotation from Habakkuk 2:4. Thus, in this brief prophetic book, we find the seeds of the glorious gospel of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.⁵

Habakkuk, Minor Prophet of the Old Testament

The man thus credited by the Apostle Paul with this spiritual and doctrinal influence was, Habakkuk, a minor prophet of Israel during the period surrounding the Babylonian captivity, circa. 600 BC. Though little is known about Habbakkuk’s background, there is agreement among most bible commentaries concerning the etymology of his name, The name Habakkuk means: “The cordially embraced one (favorite of God), or the cordial embracer.” Luther writes about Habakkuk: “A man of

⁵ Youngblood, *Nelson’s Illustrated Bible Dictionary, New and Enhanced Edition*, 494.

heart, hearty toward another, taking him into his arms. This Habakkuk does in his prophecy; he comforts and lifts up his people, as one would do with a weeping child, bidding him be quiet, because, please God, it would yet be better with him.”⁶

According to *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, “Some of the ancient rabbis, connecting the name with 2 Kings 4:16, ‘Thou shalt embrace a son,’ imagined that the prophet was the son of the Shunammite woman. The Septuagint form of the name, Hambakoum; Theodotion Hambakouk presupposes the Hebrew chabbaquq. A similar word occurs in Assyrian as the name of a garden plant.”⁷ Not much is definitively known about the specific details of the background or early life of Habakkuk, other than those facts that can be reasonably deduced from history or from the record of the scripture, itself. It is helpful that Habakkuk identifies himself as a prophet in the first chapter of the book which bears his name, although in ancient Israel, it was often true that many of the prophets had other professions which they relied on for their daily bread. There has been some scholarly speculation that Habakkuk’s profession might have been that of a musician skilled in the use of musical instruments. One of the reasons for this assumption is the clearly liturgical character of the book of Habakkuk; another is the fact that the last chapter of the book of Habakkuk is a song, as evidenced by the musical instruction at the end, which the New Scofield Reference Bible footnote identifies as “a

⁶ Schultz, *Commentary on Habakkuk 2003*, available at http://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC_Habakkuk.PDF .

⁷ James Orr, “*Commentary on Habakkuk*,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Online*, accessed August 2010 at <http://www.internationalstandardbible.com/H/habakkuk.html>.

musical notation for the choirmaster for the Temple liturgy.”⁸ The musical nature of the temple liturgy is supported by the fact that musical instruments such as the lyre, harp, and cymbals are specifically identified in I Chronicles 25:1 as the types of instruments used in the temple worship services. If it was the case that the prophet Habakkuk might have had, concurrent with his more divinely appointed role of prophet who served at the direct behest of God, a “full time job” as a musician/poet/priest who was assigned to the temple, which, if true, would have tied him fairly closely to Jerusalem during his period as prophet of Israel and certainly during the time when the book of Habakkuk was written.. As we shall shortly see, by the time of Habakkuk, Israel’s prophets were held in such low esteem by the Kings of Israel, that prophets could not have expected to earn a living by bringing the unwelcome word of God to the ears of the King. From the theory that Habakkuk may have been a musician one can also speculate that he may have been of the tribe of Levi, since to that tribe was assigned the responsibility for the temple worship liturgy.⁹ It is assumed that at the time that the book of Habakkuk was written, he lived in Jerusalem, upon whose towers he ascended to meditate, and pray, seek the will of God through the visionary experience.

Since Habakkuk’s book consists of five oracles concerning the Babylonians, who rose to power in 612 BC, that is the date most closely assigned to its composition. It is generally agreed by modern Old Testament scholars, that there is not documentable historical or canonical value in the references to Habakkuk which are derived either from

⁸ C. I. Scofield, C. I. *The New Scofield Reference Bible* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1967), 956.

⁹ Cyril J. Barber, *Habakkuk and Zephaniah, Everyman’s Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1985), 23.

the Rabbinic tradition as recorded in the Zohar (Volume 1, page 8b) where he is reputed to be the son of the Shunammite woman who was restored to life by the prophet Elisha in 2 Kings 4:16 and in the narrative of Bel and the Dragon, which is found in the an extended apocryphal chapter of the book of Daniel where Habakkuk who is in Jerusalem preparing a pot of stew is reputedly carried by an angel from Jerusalem to Babylon to provide Daniel with this stew to strengthen the exiled Daniel during his trial in the lion's den. (Daniel 14:1–22)

According to George Lofton, prophets are the human beings to whom God made revelations regarding God's will for communication to humankind.¹⁰ Lofton suggests there were many prophets, especially in the days prior to the coming of Christ, and we have no means of learning exactly their number. The Old Testament contains the writing of sixteen of the foremost prophets, divided into two groups, four Major Prophets and twelve Minor Prophets.¹¹ Habakkuk is considered one of the twelve Minor Prophets and probably lived close to the time of Jeremiah.

Old Testament scholar and theologian, Walter Brueggeman, author of *Reverberations of Faith: Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes*, has suggested:

The prophecy that is central to the Old Testament is an ancient Near Eastern phenomenon. He cautions that before we come to the peculiar markings of Israelite prophecy, considering the matter more generically can be helpful. He views the prophets psychologically, anthropologically, and sociologically. Psychologically, the prophets are people who have common access to matters of God's will and purpose that are hidden to other humans. Anthropologically, the prophets of ancient Israel have much in common with other social manifestations,

¹⁰ Lofton, George A. *A Railway through the Word*, (Nashville, TN: The Southwestern Company, 1908), 431.

¹¹ Laymon, *Volume 7 Acts and Letters of Paul*, 112.

so that the peculiar knowledge of the prophet is not unlike that held by spiritualists in other cultures. Sociologically, the prophets are situated realistically among the issues of social power, functioning as speakers and advocates for a variety of social interests that are said to be congruent with Gods will and purpose.¹²

Prophets were known primarily because of their oracular utterances, introduced characteristically by the formula, “Thus saith the Lord” (KJV). In Habakkuk’s case, he uses the words, “And the Lord answered me and said.” According to Brueggeman, this formula was intended to establish divine authority for the prophetic visionary experience over everyone, including the king. Over several centuries a variety of such holy utterances were voiced in Israel. These words were treasured, remembered, and collected by other members of the community.

Habakkuk’s words are remembered because of his prophetic personality. “The prophetic personalities tended to be clustered around great public crises in Israel. As much as our knowledge permits, these utterances should be understood in the context of quite concrete sociopolitical emergencies.”¹³ Brueggemann claims that Habakkuk spoke in a rather characteristic oracular patterns, such that speeches of judgment indicted Israel for disobedience of God’s commands, and sentenced Israel to punishments congruent with sanctions of the covenant. The effect of these recurring modes of speech is to assert that all of the life of Israel-Judah is in the presence of YHWH’s rule, and that every sphere of its life as God’s people must come to term with God’s purposes.¹⁴

¹² Walter Brueggemann, *Reverberations of Faith: Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 158.

¹³ Ibid., 159.

¹⁴ Ibid.

What is known is that Habakkuk is a type of the visionary leader who, in his position as a prophet is clearly a recognized spiritual leader in Israel, regardless of whether he is liked and approved by the king. The Theology of Work Project, an independent, international organization dedicated to researching, writing, and distributing materials with a biblical perspective the concept of work, a prophet is defined as one “called by God and filled with God's Spirit. . .[and one who] spoke God's word to people who had in one way or another distanced themselves from God. In one sense, a prophet is a preacher. But in marketplace terms, a prophet is often a whistle-blower, particularly when an entire tribe or nation has turned away from God”¹⁵.

In Old Testament history, while prophets existed and played an important role even before the advent of the Kingship, after the advent of the Kingship, while there were periods when the king and the prophet existed in harmony, it seemed as if Israel was perpetually embroiled in conflict between the spiritual leadership of the prophet and the temporal leadership of the king. In a spiritual sense, while the truly religious actually believed that God expressed his will for the people of Israel through his prophet, using the medium of a vision or some other supernatural phenomenon.

In the years after original covenant was made between God and Israel, kings and the wealthy and powerful of Israel viewed their own nobility and high status as outranking that of the prophet. In some cases, prophets were not well treated by the kings, at least until some calamity befell the state, and the repentant kings suddenly

¹⁵ “Old Testament Introduction to the Prophets,” last modified February 14, 2014, accessed March 12, 2016, <http://www.theologyofwork.org>.

remembered the need for humility before God. This is precisely why Habakkuk was in position upon the wall, so that he can voice his complaint which reveals his intense reaction to the injustice which rules his country. In addition to the internal problems of Israel, Habakkuk also felt compelled to wait upon the vision or other sign of God's will for his people, in face of the terrible oppression that they feared would befall them at the hand of the conquering Babylonians, who have already killed the king and are laying siege to the city of Jerusalem of God's plan of chastisement or Jehoiakim's decision to break the covenant between Israel and God.¹⁶

Jehoiakim's reign was marked by injustice, treachery, and bloodshed (Jer 22:3,13-17). Therefore the Chaldeans should be sent to deal with him and his nobles according to their dealings with others." David's complaint centuries early is relevant here: "When the foundations are being destroyed, what can the righteous do?"¹⁷

Some scholars such as Bernard Anderson believed that the stronger rebuke to a simple view of God's justice in history was given by the prophet Habakkuk. His prophecy, found in Habakkuk 1 and 2, comes from about the time of the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C.¹⁸ Faced with the monstrous, lawless evil that Babylonian power represents, he raises a poignant cry of anguish and perplexity.

People today have the same cry in churches and in communities. When one looks at the sociopolitical practices that are taking place in the world, nation, communities, and churches, one can hear the cry of people who are filled with anguish and frustration. The

¹⁶ Laymon, *Volume 7, Acts and the Letters of Paul*, 115.

¹⁷ Robert Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and David Brown, *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, Scranton, CT: The S. S. Scranton Company, 1871, accessed July 16, 2015, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/jamieson-fausset-brown/habakkuk/habakkuk-2.html>.

¹⁸ Bernhard W. Anderson, *Understanding the Old Testament* (Englewoodcliffs, N.J.:Prentice-Hall Inc, 1957), 322.

anguish arises because people are concerned that a number of social, economic, and political control mechanisms appear to justify unrighteousness, as practices which have been condemned in scripture acquire legal status and become socially acceptable. The sociopolitical system in which we live today is one which fosters oppression by ensuring that the wealthy hold all the positions of power and that the poor are perpetually in subjectivity to those who hold all the power.

We see an example of sociopolitical oppression in the book of Habakkuk. The book of Habakkuk discloses the sociopolitical context of oppression and explains why this situation has occurred.

The prophet wonders whether history does justify the righteous, or whether instead brute power is really the factor that determines humankind's destiny. To him it is strange that when Yahweh is the ruler of History, the Chaldeans (that is, the Babylonians) can sweep like a wild avalanche over men's lives, destroying all patterns of meaning and defying the most elementary human justice. These ruthless invaders rule by defining justice in their own terms; they are guilty men, whose own might is their god. Not that Yahweh's people are guiltless! But at least they are "more righteous" than the nation, which is a law unto itself. Divine judgement, which other prophets had proclaimed in times of invasion, makes no sense if the man of faith cannot discern some purpose in historical events.¹⁹

According to Anderson, "no immediate answer is given to Habakkuk's question. But he takes his stand on his "watchtower of faith" and receives an answer to his prayer that lifts his eyes to the horizons of the future, which is found in Habakkuk 2:1-4. "²⁰

According to the Holman Bible Dictionary,

a vision is an experience in the life of the person, whereby a special revelation from God was received. The revelation from God had two purposes. First, a vision was given for immediate direction. Second, a vision was given to develop the kingdom of God by revealing the moral and spiritual deficiencies of the

¹⁹ Ibid., 322-323.

²⁰ Ibid.

people of God in light of God's requirement for maintaining a proper relationship with him. Several Greek and Hebrew terms are translated by the English word vision.²¹

The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words says a vision is a sight or revelation.²² The Hebrew/Aramaic Dictionary uses the word *chezev* (Chald.) for the English word vision.²³ The Hebrew/Aramaic Dictionary uses the word *chazown* for the English words sight or revelation.²⁴ On account, "the text relies on historical and prophetic sources to give substance to the vision."²⁵ The word vision plays an important role in the verses precisely because it is used as God's means of resolution in direct response to Habakkuk's lament. The book of Habakkuk falls into three distinct divisions: I. The Perplexity of the Prophet (Habakkuk 1:1-2:1); II. The Answer of God, (Habakkuk 2:2-20); and III. The Triumphant Faith of Habakkuk, (Habakkuk 3), but this research will only concentrate on three verses in the second division of the book, which stress the idea that revelation must be easy to understand (Habakkuk 2:2) and the idea that revelation will prove true in God's time (Habakkuk 2:3).²⁶

²¹ Trent C. Butler, Marsha A. Smith, Forrest W. Jackson, Phil Logan, Chris Church, editors. *The Holman Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 1396.

²² James Strong, *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996), 272.

²³ *Ibid.*, 364.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Brain Peckham, "The Vision of Habakkuk" *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 48 no 40, 1986, accessing June 11, 2014. <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=rft&AN=ATLA0000966807&site=ehost-live>>The Vision of Habakkuk 618.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 591.

The King James (KJV) and New Revised Standard (NRSV) version of the bible the word vision is used. The King James Version states:

and Lord answered me, and said. Write the vision and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. 3For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry. (Habakkuk 2:2-3)

The New Revised Standard Version states, “

then the Lord answered me and said: write the vision and make it plain on tablets so that a runner may read it. For there is still a vision for the appointed time; it speaks of the end, and does not lie. If it seems to tarry wait for it;²⁷

But the New International Version uses the word revelation,

then the Lord replied: write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that the herald may run with it. For the *revelation* awaits an appointed time; it speaks at the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay.

Even though the three read differently, the three versions of the text still have the same connotation about the timeless and inexplicable potency of the spiritual vision which is truly of God..

According to Brain Peckham , the original text was a lament.²⁸ Walter Brueggemann says,

a lament is a stylized form of speech-usually poetic-and was a preferred and characteristic way of petitionary prayer in Israel. The lament is a daringly assertive way for Israel to address God in its need and ask (or expect or demand) that God should and must respond decisively to alleviate or overcome the need. The Old Testament regularly assumes that Israel's forceful petition is a proper, legitimate form of prayer and that Israel has a right and an obligation to ask God in insistent ways. Moreover, the assumption is that God has a legitimate obligation to answer the prayer, because God's own people, who are bound to God

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., 618.

in a covenant of mutual fidelity and commitment, are offering it. On rare occasions the prayer is a sad lament in a mood of resignation. Much more often, the prayer is a protest or complaint that actively expects a good resolution from God.²⁹

Brueggemann's suggestion that a stylized form of prayer is often in the voice of an individual speaker who prays as a member of the community but who, at the same time, speaks from an intimate personal relationship with God is appropriate here. Such personal prayers may petition God out of illness or social isolation or perhaps prison. He further suggests that sometimes the prayer expresses guilt and ask forgiveness, but much more often the prayer voices loyalty to God and seeks a responding loyalty from God.

During Habakkuk's time,

Judah had just experienced the exhilaration of the glorious days of Josiah, marked by freedom, prosperity, and a great religious revival. The Assyrians, once the scourge of the Middle East, were only a shadow of their former selves. In their place however, stood the Babylonians. In the book of Habakkuk they are called the Chaldeans, so named for the region from which their rules came. The Babylonian armies were led by the energetic Nebuchadnezzar, who was soon to succeed his father Nabopolassar as king.³⁰

During this era,

there was a spirit of invasion, oppression, vengeance, and vindication in the air when one takes an exegetical walk through the time of Habakkuk. The spirit of invasion was in the air due to the imminent Chaldean (Babylonian) invasion of Judah.³¹

²⁹ Walter Brueggman, *Reverberations of Faith: Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes*, 118-119.

³⁰ The Holman Bible Dictionary (Nashville, Tennessee: Holman Bible Publishers, 1991), 590.

³¹ William S. Lasor, David A. Hubbard, and Fredric W. Bush, *The Message Form, and Background of the Old Testament: Old Testament Survey* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), 322.

According to some scholars,

the Chaldeans were Semitic-speaking tribes that settled in southern Mesopotamia, where they established their rule, later extending farther north. They grew strong enough to overthrow Assyrian rule with the help of another new people, the Indo-European Medes, who had established themselves in modern western Iran.”³²

According to Brian Peckham,

the book of Habakkuk is a composite unity. It is an unusual blend of liturgical and sapiential texts. It lacks the customary interests and formulaics of prophecy but supposes familiarity with prophetic tradition and quotes from prophetic texts. It seems to be concerned with world affairs and their cosmic repercussions, but it lapse into tirades against injustice that reflect domestic issues and purely national interests.³³

It is in the second chapter of the book of Habakkuk where the original assurance of being heard and the actual response into a detailed solution to the problems discussed in the first chapter. The specific problem discussed in the first chapter. The specific problem discussed in the duplicate address to Yahweh is the inadequacy of normal legal procedures for the vindication of the innocent and the punishment of the guilty. This problem is solved by the dictum that the book appends to Yahweh's confirmation of the vision (Habakkuk 2:4): the innocent survive by believing in the vision, while the presumption of the guilty is no defense against it.³⁴

Yahweh's confirmation of the vision is also looked upon as a revelation of God.

According to Holman Bible Dictionary,

³²McKay Hill and Buckler Ebrey, *A History of World Societies Fifth edition Volume 1 to 1715* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000), 48.

³³ Peckham, *The Vision of Habakkak*, 617.

³⁴ Ibid, 620.

the revelation of God is the content and process of God's making himself known to people. All knowledge of God comes by a way of revelation. Human knowledge of God comes by the way of revelation. Human knowledge of God is revealed knowledge since God, and He alone, gives it. The word revelation means an uncovering, a removal of the veil, a disclosure of what was previously unknown. Revelation of God is God's manifestation of Himself to humankind in such a way that men and women can know and fellowship with Him.³⁵

Both Habakkuk's faithfulness in waiting for the vision, in performing his appointed duty of prophecy to Israel, and his ultimate understanding that as a visionary leader of Israel, he must put his faith in God, his will beneath the mighty will of God, and he must wait—in God's time rather than man's, upon the Lord. The transformative understanding that all is within the will and providence of God are reasons for the joy Habakkuk expresses in the final chapter of the book of Habakkuk when he exults, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength, and he make my feet like hinds feet, and he will make me walk upon mine high places." (Habakkuk 3: 18) The concluding psalm of praise has been called one of the most beautiful in biblical literature. According to the *Pulpit Commentary*,

there is something very striking in the style of Habakkuk. In grandeur and magnificence it is perhaps by other of the prophets; language as pure, power as concentrated, may be found elsewhere; but the extended colloquy between God and the prophet, and the exquisitely beautiful ode which forms the conclusion of the prophecy, are unique. We know not whether most to admire the idea set forth, or the images under which it is developed. How terrible are the threatenings and announcements! how bitter the derision! how sweet and tender the promises of mercy and love! The past, the present, and the future are presented in vivid colors. Difficult, almost impossible, as it was for a prophet, confined to one circle of ideas, to be original, Habakkuk has given a new form to old conceptions, and brightened the notions of earlier seers with the splendor of imagery all his own, and with harmonious diction which is surpassed by no other sacred poet. The final

³⁵ Butler, Smith, Jackson, Logan, and Church, editors, *The Holman Bible Dictionary*, 1180-1181.

ode may be set beside the two grand psalms, the eighteenth and the sixty-eighth, and will not suffer by the comparison.”³⁶

Habakkuk’s faithfulness as a visionary leader in a time of oppression is also evident in his acceptance of the role of watchman for Israel. In this role he was deeply aware that the imminent dangers he perceived as watchman were the consequence not only of the imminent danger posed by King Nebuchadnezzar who was angry because of King Jehoiakim’s unsuccessful attempt to throw off the Babylonian bondage of the kingdom of Judah, but also because of the long standing spiritual and moral decline of the kingdom, which had led finally to the arrogant Kings of Israel breaking the covenant that their fathers had made with God, and turning from the way of righteousness to dark and wicked ways. Scripture reveals that through all these problems, Habakkuk kept his focus on his role as the visionary leader of the nation who communicated directly with God, and as the watchman upon the city walls,

I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will say unto me, and what I shall answer when I am reprov’d. Then the Lord answered me and said: “Write the vision And make it plain on tablets, That he may run who reads it. For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie. Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come, It will not tarry. (Habakkuk 2:1-3 NIV.)

We live in a challenging, complex, and unpredictable world in which it is increasingly recognized that planning is a key to survival. This is just as true for organizations like the church as it is for organizations in the corporate world. While a corporate vision might be built upon a foundation of man’s intellect, knowledge, logic,

³⁶ Joseph S. Exell, R. Payne Smith, and C. Kegan Paul *The Pulpit Commentary* (Harrington, DE: Delmarva Publications, 2013), 176-177.

and even common sense, the vision of a true house of worship, while it may make use of those corporate features, must be underwritten by faith in God which must have primacy over all else. It is through this lens of faith that the seventh century prophet Habakkuk peers, as he focuses on the response of God to his lament about the oppression suffered by Israel. After a period of waiting, Habakkuk is, subsequently led by the Spirit to speak to the people the words which came to him in the vision during one of the most challenging and oppressive times of internal injustice and external oppression in their history. The prophet was a visionary leader during what must have seemed a most destructive and hopeless time to the Israelites during the seventh century –literally enlightening men who walked in the darkness of their earthly reality with the inner light of his spiritual vision. What Habakkuk could not have known was that the scattering the Jewish people among many nations would set up the precise circumstances which would form the Jewish and Gentile context within which another visionary Jewish leader, Saul of Tarsus, would be called by God, not from a faithful watchtower like Habakkuk, but from the middle of a dusty Damascus road on his way to persecute as many Christians as he could capture.

Paul the Apostle of the New Testament

The Apostle Paul is also a type of the visionary leader in much the same sense that Habakkuk who preceded him had been, although in his former persona of Saul of Tarsus he was more of a much feared representative of the Pharisees which worked actively to eliminate what they considered the heretical and illegal new religion of Christianity and to severely punish those found practicing this faith. Saul of Tarsus, the

zealot, a tent-maker by trade, the man who came to be known as the Paul the Apostle, came from a wealthy family, and had the status of Roman citizenship by virtue of his place of birth, the Roman city of Tarsus in the region of Cilicia in Asia Minor where he studied in his youth under the great Jewish Rabbi Gamaliel who was a highly respected member of the Jewish Sanhedrin Court. Gamaliel , who instructed young Saul in Jewish law (Acts 22:3) , is mentioned several times in the book of Acts where he is referred to as a man of honor and where his unwillingness to condemn the Apostles is favorably mentioned (Acts 5:34). Since Saul of Tarsus studied with such a scholar of renown, it seems safe to make the assertion that he was an exceptionally well-educated an of his day and naturally of an intellectual bent, qualities which he would later use to great effect in his ministry, although after his conversion, he was very self-effacing and always made sure to value these qualities as nothing when placed beside the incomparable grace of God.

As a member of the Jewish Pharisee ruling class who did not recognize Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah and who did not believe that the prophecy of the Messiah born of the lineage of David had been fulfilled, Saul had very little tolerance for what he considered to be the heretical new Christian faith which seemed to be gaining more new converts every day, especially among the poor, the marginalized, and the oppressed.

Much has been written about the extreme zealousness of Saul of Tarsus and the Pharisees in eradicating Christianity and oppressing Christians everywhere. The fact that Saul was actually present at the trial and probably approved the execution of the Christian martyr Stephen, seems confirmed by the scriptures which describe the reaction of the Pharisees to the testimony of Stephen and the role played by Saul of Tarsus,

I saw the heavens opened and eh Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city and stoned him; and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.” (Acts 7: 56-58)

The death of Stephen was not fated to be an incident which Saul would soon forget... even after his conversion. It is clear in his writings that this subject and the unbreakable bond that it created between him and Stephen who had been an Arch Deacon of the fledgling Christian church was part of God's inexplicable plan for this visionary leader whose vision was of such critical spiritual importance that the Divine eradicated every single imaginable obstacle to its success.

The martyrdom of St. Stephen, proto-martyr of the Church, and the involvement of Saul of Tarsus in the act is one of the most interesting and ironically tragic events recorded in the early history of the Church. St. Stephen, a young and zealous representative of the period when the Christian faith was all afire, because he was the earliest proponent of the freedom and universality of the Gospel, and because of the great trials and death he underwent for his preaching, is often recognized to be a type or forerunner of the great Apostle to the Gentiles. And the fact that it is this same Apostle, who, prior to his conversion, was the main instrument in bringing about the death of the arch-deacon, makes the incident all the more startling; and that death was to linger on for many years to come in the mind of the Apostle after he had become a chosen vessel of Christ.³⁷

The particular irony of Paul's relationship with Stephen is that the reason for the oppression of the Christians in Jerusalem is rooted in the fact that over the years since the Diaspora, the nation of Israel had been divided strictly along the lines of Hebrews and Hellenists, although each was equally Jewish. While the Hebrews strictly adhered to the

³⁷ Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States, *Saul of Tarsus and the Martyrdom of St. Stephen* (Sandia, TX: Saint Mary and Saint Moses Abbey Press, 2016), 215.

traditional Jewish religious practice, precisely in the manner that Paul's family did in training him to learn and observe all particulars of Jewish law and to be a "Hebrew among Hebrews," the Hellenists prided themselves on being more cosmopolitan less legalistic and fundamental in outlook and more free thinking than their Hebrew brothers who in the view of the Hellenists unnecessarily tied themselves down to all the thousand dictates of Jewish law. According to the Coptic Church Statement of Doctrine,

Both groups were Jews, yet different in culture and language. Hebrews attended synagogues in which the services were held in Hebrew and used Aramaic in their normal speech; Hellenists spoke mainly Greek and held their synagogue worship in that language. The difference was the result of the history of the Diaspora: the Babylonian, Persian, and Greek captivities of the Jewish people caused them to disperse all over the Mediterranean world, where they became assimilated to the manners and speech of their respective lands of immigration.³⁸

What this means essentially is that the reason for the differences which brought about the oppressive hostility between the traditional Jewish Hebrews and the nontraditional Jewish Hellenites, can be traced all the way back to the time of Habakkuk and the invasion of the Babylonians, which was to be the first of many which would transform and alienate different elements of the Jewish people from one another, and with the added stimulus of the Christian religion, was indirectly responsible hundreds of years later, for the sharply divisive cultural and religious differences which led to the overzealousness of Saul, and his participation in the death of Stephen who, as Paul was to discover, was not only his brother in the Jewish faith, but his brother in Christ as well.

Before the full significance of his role in Stephen's death could begin to set in, Saul continued to play a particularly devastating role on the early Christian church and, in

³⁸ Ibid.

the process, built a formidable reputation based on his violent intrusions into the homes of believers, arresting them and all their house, and throwing them in prison. In fact, this reputation still persisted even after Saul's conversion experience on the Damascus road when, as Paul, he began his Christian ministry, "But all that heard him were amazed, and said: Is not this he that destroyed them who called on this name in Jerusalem, and came here for that intent, that he might bring them bound unto the chief priests." (Acts 7:21)

As scripture indicates, Saul's anti-Christian zeal reached such heights that he was not content merely to arrest the males of the Christian households that he raided, but insisted upon arresting the females as well, "As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and hailing men and women, committed them to prison (Acts 8:3).

Years after his conversion, Paul retrospectively describes his zealousness in his letter to the Galatians,

You have heard, no doubt, of my earlier life in Judaism. I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it. I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors. But when God, who had set me apart before I was born and called me through his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to me, so that I might proclaim him among the Gentiles, I did not confer with any human being. (Gal 1:13–16)

When Saul was finally made aware of the fact that God had called him specifically to a position of visionary leadership as an Apostle, it was in a spectacular vision, which took place as he was on the road to Damascus, where, had all gone according to his plan, he would have arrested even more members of the Christian church. For all practical purposes, the actions of the anti-Christian Saul can be compared to the complaining Habakkuk who dares at the beginning of his revelatory confrontation with God to be highly critical of both God's timing and his decision to permit evil to thrive in Judah and

even more for his decision to use the idolatrous Babylonians as a rod of correction to his chosen people. There is little question that the spiritual life of Israel in the day of Habakkuk was such at an extremely low ebb that God in his justice was compelled to take a corrective action which was similar in degree to the affliction. In this case, God decided that correction would be applied by allowing evil to prevail for a given period of time and in its own violence and oppression, literally destroy itself. In its description of this aspect of God's divine visionary plan in terms of the kingdom of Israel during the time of Habakkuk, *The Matthew Henry's Commentary* comments on the fact that when the visionary experience is for the purpose of correction, as it most often is, because of the terrifying, but supremely fair justice of God,³⁹ the terms presented in the visionary experience are usually closely related to the actual prevailing conditions which demand attention and correction in the world, and perhaps especially in the church,

An amazing punishment, so strange and surprising, and so much out of the common road of Providence, that it shall not be paralleled among the heathen, shall be sorer and heavier than what God has usually inflicted upon the nations that know him not; nay, it shall not be credited even by those that had the prediction of it from God before it comes, or the report of it from those that were eye-witnesses of it when it comes: You will not believe it, though it be told you; it will be thought incredible that so many judgments should combine in one, and every circumstance so strangely concur to enforce and aggravate it, that so great and potent a nation should be so reduced and broken, and that God should deal so severely with a people that had been taken into the bond of the covenant and that he had done so much for. The punishment of God's professing people cannot but be the astonishment of all about them.⁴⁰

In Habakkuk's case this sense of amazement would have been Habakkuk's genuine shock over how extraordinarily low the nation of Israel was fated to fall. The

³⁹ Matthew Henry, *Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2003, accessed December 21, 2015, <http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/matthew-henry-concise/habakkuk/>.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

thought of having Jerusalem overrun, the temple destroyed and the people scattered, was almost too much for Habakkuk to comprehend. In the case of Paul, the astonishment over the fact that he had been misled by the same Mosaic law which had guided his thinking and his beliefs all of his life, and the realization that he must abandon the faith of his fathers in which he took such pride must have been overwhelming to his senses.

Paul's kinship to Habakkuk as a visionary leader is underscored by the fact that Paul is almost certainly thinking of this sense of visionary amazement that Habakkuk surely felt when he learned and fully understood the magnitude of God's planned use of Babylon as a means of extreme chastisement of Israel and compares that level of chastisement with the fate of those who refuse to accept the Messiah,

when he quoted Habakkuk in the synagogue of Pisidian Antioch. Comparing the Jews' rejection of the Gospel to the moral corruption of Israel [in the day of Habakkuk] he warned: "Look, you scoffers, wonder and perish, for I am going to do something in your days that you would never believe, even if someone told you." (Acts 13:41) If events on earth can cause such consternation that even God recoils from them in heaven, how much greater horror should we feel about hell?⁴¹

The point of the astonishing nature of the visionary experience, whether the message is positive or negative, rests upon three factors. First, the vision is astonishing because it is a means by which men may communicate directly with God. The vision which provides instruction and comfort to Habakkuk and that which arrested Paul on the Damascus road, were astonishing supernatural events which work totally through faith and have no explanation in the science or logic of man. Second, the vision is astonishing because God wants to get the attention of worldly men whose minds are pre-occupied with the things

⁴¹ Ibid.

of the earth rather than the things of heaven. Sending the vicious Babylonians, who have already conquered and oppressed Persia, Egypt, and Judah is an extremely grave response from God because of the extremely grave displeasure of God at the breaking of the Covenant. Third, the vision is astonishing precisely because the sin of man is so great and God is so just that for the exceedingly great sin of man the justice of God requires a vision that will amaze and astonish man to the same degree that man has displeased his God. Finally, the vision is astonishing simply because, as God informs Habakkuk in his response, God will not be mocked; the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord; and the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth keep silence before him.

This final definitive statement of the indescribable might and power and majesty of God helps us to better understand the wondrous tenderness of God's response to Habakkuk's doubting questions and to better understand to what lengths God will go – even to the point of allowing the probing questions of a sincerely troubled Habakkuk – in order to ensure that the visionary leader understands the mind of God. Habakkuk is unique because he is the first man ever to question how God orders the affairs of the world, and, as some commentators have claimed, did so with a certain degree of logic,

the prophet is correct in maintaining that Israel's condition is incongruent with the character of God. God had given His perfect law to the nation that guaranteed righteousness and justice. Now the law is paralyzed in Israel and justice has become impotent. After centuries of possessing the law, Israel had returned to the times of the Book of Judges when: "Israel had no king; everyone did as he saw fit." (Judg. 21:25) And what people "saw fit" was not good. The words: "The wicked hem in the righteous, so that justice is perverted" indicate that there were still some righteous people left, but they were put under such pressure that their testimony had become ineffective.⁴²

⁴² Schultz, *Commentary on Habakkuk 2003*, accessed march 21, 2016, http://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC_Habakkuk.PDF.

In his infinite love and mercy, God understands that both the overzealousness of Saul of Tarsus and the initial impudence, questioning, and impatience of Habakkuk the Prophet. Although they can certainly not be called “good,” are also not grounded in an evil purpose, as much as in the fallen nature of man and his continuing need for a visionary” Road to Damascus” or “Watchtower” experience which will divinely illumine him, heighten his understanding, and provide him with the inspired leadership which will liberate those who are bound by the dehumanizing effect of oppression. The logic employed by Habakkuk in his questioning of God is basically sound, and at least in an earthly sense, his reasoning does not seem to be faulty. In the same sense, the overzealousness of Saul was strictly in accordance with the dictates of Mosaic Law. Perhaps God recognizes in both men their adherence to the set of human principles in which they believe, but he chooses not to take punitive measures against either of them. Accordingly, God graciously forgives and overlooks both the affront of Habakkuk who questioned the wisdom of God, and the affront of Paul whose actions against the early church were an oppressive denial of the existence of the Son of God. In his own time, God communicates with each of them through a powerful and transforming vision which, empowers them to do his will as visionary leaders.

In Paul’s encounter on the road to Damascus with the risen Christ, there is none of the familiarity with the visionary experience which is seen in Habakkuk, who despite his complaining, goes voluntarily to the wall in his spiritual role as prophet, to wait upon the Lord. Saul of Tarsus, although skilled in Jewish law, knows little of the risen Christ and

even less about Christianity, and what he does know, he violently opposes. He is described as a very passionate and self-righteous man who set out on the road to Damascus literally “breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord” who he vowed to capture and bring back “bound” to stand before the bar of justice for their practice of the illegal Christian faith. His obvious zealousness for his work certainly cannot be taken to mean that Saul of Tarsus was not interested in visionary leadership, because as devout member of the Jewish faith, who described himself who provided the following description of himself,

“Circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.” (Philippians 3:5-6)

The following explication by Robert B. Sloan, Jr., of each significant part of Paul’s self-description will reveal a good deal about Saul of Tarsus, particularly about the high value he places upon Mosaic law. It will also reveal that much of the zealousness of Paul can be traced to the oppressive attitudes that the Pharisees of Paul’s day had towards the members of the early Christian church, even to the use of violence and extreme dehumanization of the early Christians such as Stephen,

- The ritual circumcising on “the eighth day” was precisely according to Jewish custom;
- To be born of the nation of Israel meant automatic entitlement to all benefits of Jewish culture and ethnicity;
- To be born of the tribe of Benjamin a Hebrew of Hebrew, was to be born of Israel’s most highly esteemed of the twelve tribes of Israel;
- To be named Paul, which was the Latin form of Saul, was to have the name of a Jewish King;
- To be a Pharisee was to be ever ready to defend the purity of Israel and the Mosaic law;

- To be a zealous prosecutor of the church meant willingness to use violence to enforce the Torah of Moses against the Christians who were blasphemers against Mosaic law. “As to the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.” ⁴³

In terms of the attributes described above, Saul of Tarsus was virtually blameless, both in his own eyes and in the eyes of the traditional Jewish community who followed to the letter the Law of Moses, especially the Pharisees. In addition, Saul is certainly cognizant of the revelatory and visionary nature of the Jewish prophetic experience and obviously a man who is very committed to strong leadership and to decisive action.

There is little question that Saul was a visionary leader, but until he actually had his Damascus experience, his vision was drawn directly from the legalistic dictates of the Jewish legal tradition of the Mosaic law which he had learned at the feet of Gamaliel as a youth. If Saul of Tarsus had heard of any of the miracles which the Christians claimed that Jesus had performed, such as miraculously turning water into wine or feeding 5,000 people with a few loaves of bread and a few fish, he certainly did not believe such absurd claims, and judged the stories which circulated about the Jesus of Nazareth the Messiah to be falsehoods. Like the other devout Pharisees, including those who had worked with the Roman governor to facilitate the execution of Jesus, he sincerely believed the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, but he did not believe that those prophecies had been fulfilled. Paul most assuredly would not have believed that this Jesus of Nazareth had risen from the dead as the most heretical of the Christians insisted, especially after the ignominy of his death by crucifixion along with common criminals, a fact which, had

⁴³ Robert Sloan *What Does It Mean to Be a Hebrew of Hebrews?* accessed March 21, 2016, <https://robertbsloan.com/2014/07/02/momentum-what-does-it-mean-to-be-a-hebrew-of-hebrews-part-2>.

the zealous Paul bothered to check the known prophecies of the Messiah, such as Isaiah 53:9, he would have seen that death in the company of criminals had long been predicted for the Messiah.,. As he set out with his deputies on the Damascus road, Saul was likely seething as he worked himself into the frenzy which he planned to exercise upon the unfortunate Christians who would feel his wrath for their blasphemy against the Law.

And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, And desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: *it is* hard for thee to kick against the goads. (Acts 9:1-5)

It is noteworthy that although Saul of Tarsus does not have even the remotest idea about the identity of the glorious being he encounters on the Damascus road, but as is evidenced by the manner that he addresses this splendid figure as “Lord,” and the immediate deference he provides to him, that Saul knows intuitively that the person standing before him in such indescribable splendor is his Lord and Master. Even overzealous and legalistic Saul of Tarsus cannot fail to recognize from somewhere deep within his innermost soul, the undisputed Lordship and Kingship of the risen Christ. In that instant, although Saul did not know how or even why, he understood with rare certainty that his life was forever changed.

When Saul is asked by the living Christ “Why persecutest thou me?” we are brought back to the theme of oppression and persecution. Only this time, the nation of Israel are not the oppressed, and the brutal Babylonian soldiers who ransacked Jerusalem, destroyed its hold temple and scattered its inhabitants to the wind; this time it was the poor Christian believers who followed after a man called Jesus, and it was Paul, himself, who,

until that hour, had been chief among the oppressors who had almost completed the journey to Damascus where in his self-righteous fury he fully intended to continue his vigorous campaign to destroy the enemies of the Mosaic law. The shining light that stunned Saul on the road to Damascus, did more than reveal to him the same glorious splendor of the risen Christ that had been previously witnessed by the martyred Stephen, and it did more than render him completely blind for three days. It transformed him in an instant from the oppressor of God's people into God's champion and a visionary leader of the oppressed.

We see somewhat similar patterns when we compare Habakkuk's questioning of the will of God with the way that Saul of Tarsus was brought to his position of acceptance of his call to Christian discipleship and leadership, against his will, literally "kicking against the goads" –the sharp sticks that farmers used to prod their more stubborn cattle and oxen along. The more the angry animals kicked against the sharp stick, the more they suffered. There was not alternative other than to submit. Just as Habakkuk finally understood that all the things that he had imagined to be "wrong" with the plan of God, were, in fact, divinely ordered, so Paul would learn to harness himself in the service of the new Master whom he met in a vision while on his way to Damascus. With both Habakkuk and Paul it is clear that God selects those whom he chooses as visionary leaders and works with those who are selected until they are in conformity to his will for their lives. As the following explication demonstrates, God is patient with Habakkuk through his lamenting and through his questioning,

Habakkuk begins his book with a cry of woe. Injustice is rampant, the righteous are surrounded by the wicked, the law is powerless, and God does not seem to care about the plight of His people (Habakkuk 1:1-4). Habakkuk's prophecy is even introduced as a "burden" which the prophet saw (Habakkuk 1:1). He

wonders why God is allowing these things to happen. God's reply brings little comfort to the prophet. He explains that the armies of Babylon are moving throughout the ancient world on a campaign of death and destruction. At the time when Habakkuk received this vision, the Babylonians had already defeated Assyria and Egypt. The implication is that Habakkuk's nation, Judah, will be the next to fall. The prophet was shocked at the news.⁴⁴

When we consider the stunning reversal in the life of Saul of Tarsus and the many different stages of growth that Habakkuk experienced: taking upon himself the somewhat unpopular office of prophet, waiting faithfully upon the wall for the word of God, daring to question the wisdom of God, allowing the visionary experience to enlarge his understanding, and finally rejoicing and giving praise to God who is his strength, it is clear God has his own reasons for choosing those with whom he communicates through the visionary experience, and may select and appoint for leadership those who are at many different places along the spectrum of their lives and their spiritual development. All who come to the visionary experience will come unfinished and incomplete; those who tarry and wait upon the Lord will experience the wonder of the vision and will return to their places of leadership as people who have been made new through Christ.

Some have looked at Habakkuk's questioning of God merely as an act which symbolized a lack of faith and trust, but apparently God saw more than that in Habakkuk. As far as Habakkuk's close questioning of God is concerned, who, aside from God could have provided the answers that Habakkuk needed to take back the troubling word of God to Israel? To ask a question of one whose answer you trust, as Habakkuk trusted God, is perhaps the greatest indication of his underlying faith that Habakkuk could have given. Knowing already what questions lay in Habakkuk's heart: *Why dost thou show me*

⁴⁴ Schultz, *Commentary on Habakkuk*, accessed March, 21, 2016, http://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnshultz/BC_Habakkuk.PDF.

iniquity, and cause me to behold grievance? it is dubious that God would really have been pleased had Habakkuk the prophet charged with bringing the true and complete revealed word of God to all Israel, for the sake of custom, or even propriety, chose not to ask any questions at all and had falsely that he fully understood the parts of God's vision that he actually did not? By revealing his weakness openly to God in his desire to understand all aspects of the prophecy he was called to deliver, Habakkuk reveals his knowledge and faith in the omniscience of God, his trust in God's response to his questions, and his faith in the prophetic tradition and the visionary experience.

He reminded God of His justice and holiness (Habakkuk 1:12-13). How could He use the wicked Babylonians to destroy His Chosen People? Surely He realized the sins of His people were as nothing, when compared to pagan Babylonians (Habakkuk 1:13). 'Why do you...hold your tongue when the wicked devours one more righteous than he?' he asks (1:13). This direct question indicates Habakkuk's great faith. Only a person very close to God would dare question the purposes of the Almighty so boldly⁴⁵.

Habakkuk Old Testament Prophet and Paul New Testament Apostle

In the consolation it offers the people of Israel in face of the prediction of the approaching Babylonian military hordes, the book of Habakkuk is an excellent illustration of two key characteristics of the visionary leader which can be examined from the viewpoint of the liberation theologian. The first characteristic of the visionary leader is understanding, which has been enlightened and enlarged as a direct consequence of the intimate interaction with the divine, during which time the portals of divine understanding are opened . All visionary leaders who operate in a context of potentially

⁴⁵ Youngblood, *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, New and Enhanced Edition*, 495.

dangerous oppression, must possess a strong understanding of the perspectives of both the oppressors and the oppressed. By risking all and questioning the parts of the vision that he did not understand, Habakkuk, who had great difficulty in understanding how defeat of Israel at the hands of the murderous and idolatrous Babylonians could possibly be within the will of God, gained a broader understanding that the scattering of the Jewish people was part of God's greater plan which with the destruction of the temple and the capture of Jerusalem was just beginning to unfold. Habakkuk, like all visionary leaders asks logical questions according to his limited human intellectual understanding before he is made to understand that it is God, himself, who has raised up the Babylonian army and that it is the wicked King of Israel, Jehoiakim of whom it is stated in II Kings 23:37 "he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done." In other words, God responds to Habakkuk's earnest, if somewhat presumptuous, questions with the supremely appropriate response of God who is the origin of the vision, is also able to empower those he selects with the understanding needed to bring the vision to life.

God assures Habakkuk that the Babylonians will prevail not because they are righteous but because they are temporary instruments of judgment in His hands (2:4). Then he pronounces five burdens of woe against the Babylonians (Habakkuk 2:6,9,12,15,19). God will not be mocked; the end of the Babylonians is as certain as the judgment they will bring on Judah. In all of this, God will vindicate His righteous character: 'For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea' (Habakkuk 2:14). After this assurance, Habakkuk breaks out with the beautiful psalm of praise to God contained in chapter 3 of Habakkuk. ⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Ibid.,

For one thing, King Jehoiakim and his lords displayed open contempt for the prophets of God, a violation which God had already allowed to be of such long duration that it stretched back before Habakkuk's time to the days of his predecessor prophet, Jeremiah. They also broken the covenant of morality which the Kings of Israel had made with God. Jehoiakim had utterly forsaken the holy ways of his father Josiah and returned to the former practice of oppression and cruelty to the poor to such an extreme degree that the prophet Jeremiah had been moved to exclaim in horror, "You have eyes and heart only for your dishonest gain, for shedding innocent blood, and for practicing oppression and violence" (Jeremiah 22:17).

Inexplicably, God had used King Jehoiakim and his evil doings as part of his overall plan which was the historical context which only became visible to Habakkuk and his countrymen when in December 598 BC King Jehoiakim was killed in battle after his attempt to revolt against the oppression of Babylon. This attempted revolt incurred the wrath of King Nebuchadnezzar who with his mighty army was besieging the city of Jerusalem during the time that the book of Habakkuk was written. This concern with why God appears to make use of evil for the accomplishment of his perfect will is a form of theodicy which reveals to the visionary leader the fact that visionary leadership must be coupled with understanding that one must have faith in the seemingly mysterious ways and the unseen things of God.

This same type of visionary understanding is evident in the converted Saul of Tarsus, when after he has been literally struck blind – but not before witnessing the matchless splendor of the risen Lord – in trembling and astonishment all Saul of Tarsus can say at first is "Who are thou Lord?" already indicating that he understands the

greatness of the one who has appeared before him in such an unorthodox and unscientific fashion. The second thing that Paul says is “Lord what would thou have me do?”

Wrapped within this question is a new humility which is totally different from the Saul who began this journey on the road to Damascus, and there is a new awareness that in that blinding instant, everything had changed. This is the same understanding that Habakkuk received upon the wall when he needed further clarification of the will of God. And in his never failing way, God spoke precisely, giving divine and far-reaching instruction, to both of them. To Habakkuk he said: “Write the vision and make it plain on tablets, that he may run who reads it” (Habakkuk 2:2) .and to Paul he said: “Arise and go into the city and it will be told what thou must do.”(Acts 9:6)

These examples also have clear biblical implications for those visionary leaders who strive to understand the word of God. In terms of liberation theology, we see in both the case of Habakkuk and of Saul/Paul that although usually it may seem obvious who is the oppressor and who is the oppressed, men necessarily operate from a limited point of view. Only God has the unrestricted view and only he can put all the myriad pieces into divine order. While God does did not require Habakkuk or Paul to think as he does, but he did require them to have faith in the vision that he provides and, through faith, to be willing to think outside of the ordinary box in new and inspired ways that can lead to the “discovery” of solutions that God has in store for his people. .

The visionary leader must be willing to submit himself to God in the manner demonstrated by Habakkuk and Paul, so that his mind will be strengthened to the degree that he will be able to act with a high exercise a degree of divine inspiration and understanding. This divinely informed understanding might be incomprehensible to

those who rely, as Saul of Tarsus, upon logic and intellect alone. In the case of Habakkuk, after enlightenment by God, he understands that although the Babylonians appear to be the primary oppressor of Israel, in reality it is also the wickedness of King Jehoiakim which poses the greater problem to the nation. For it is because of the wickedness of King Jehoiakim that God has allowed the Babylonians who had won its independence after the fall of Nineveh [circa 626-608 BC] ⁴⁷and its rapid rise as an oppressive state whose prosperity was based largely upon its military conquest and the ensuing dehumanization and oppression of the conquered people. What was surprising about Habakkuk's vision was the fact that the Babylonians has not, at the time of Habakkuk's writing, appeared in Judea and no thought at all had been given to them as potential dangers to the nation of Israel. There is subsequently, a sense of amazement in Habakkuk's lament, which took the form of "How could God allow this to happen?" Perhaps it is the utter sincerity of the which is most important, rather than its impudence to the will of God, because as *The Pulpit Commentary* reminds us, it is a question not dissimilar to the question asked by Jesus, himself at the crucifixion,

About the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, '*Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?*'-which means, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' " The question is the answer! Our problem is that, in our inability to understand the character of the Eternal, we fail to see that our human emotions are a reflection of His emotions.⁴⁸

It is the responsibility of the visionary leader to seek to know whatever the infinitely complex mind of God will reveal and to translate that vision to his best ability

⁴⁷ Laymon, *Volume 7, Acts and the Letters of Paul*, 116.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

to God's people in ways that they are able to understand and act upon, but he must understand always, that the ways of God are always just.

Visionary Leadership and Liberation Theology

In terms of liberation theology, although they were not as aware of the spiritual condition of Israel as God was, God's people ultimately understood that Israel required liberation from two, rather than merely one danger: the oppressive weight of the sin that the king has brought to bear upon the nation, and the menacing armies of the advancing Babylonians. Instances like these provide the visionary leader with his best opportunity to demonstrate the value of faith above reason, and to underscore the fact that God makes use of both, as for example, when he used faith to test Abraham, but used reason, and perhaps divine coincidence thrown in -- to prevent the sacrifice of Abraham's beloved son, Isaac.

Similarly, in the case of Paul, the long term role that he would play in the evangelization of the Gentiles, and the short term role that he would play joining the liberationist forces of the early church whose member suffered severely from religious oppression, was always known in the mind of God. God also knew that after Paul's conversion experience on the road to Damascus, the roles of oppressor and oppressed would be totally reversed. Now it is the new man, whose name has been symbolically and literally changed from Saul to Paul and who was once chief among the oppressors of Christianity, who unexpectedly becomes the leader who in his own words is the "untimely born" disciple, prophet, and visionary leader who has been called -- by way of

a most fantastic vision-- to the monumental task of spreading the word of the resurrected Lord as a radical new means of liberation theology destined to change the Gentile world forever. Without the understanding provided in the visionary experience, neither of these visionary leaders could have begun to fulfill his mission of liberation to his dehumanized and oppressed people.

Another characteristic of the visionary leader who works within the boundaries of liberation theology is the message that God is faithful to his people and to his church through all their trials, even when they are not faithful to Him. History reveals that despite the wars and pestilence and man's propensity for evil, in the larger context of his plan of redemption, God has always been on the side of humankind. One indication of the faithfulness of God for the Christian community is the fact that there has never been a single historical occurrence which has negated the prophetic word of God as spoken by his visionary prophets down through the ages.

When looking at the present state of human affairs in the world at large, and more particularly in our churches and communities, it is easy to relate the uncertain and troubled times of today with the times of trial and oppression which are the historical context of the book of Habakkuk. Although the system of justice was maintained within Israel, since the breaking of Israel's covenant with God by its succession of wicked kings, true justice along with the righteousness of Israel, had fled,

The perversion of justice[in the Israel of Habakkuk's time] means that a façade of justice was maintained; courts were convened and justices pronounced verdicts, but the content was hollow. People were executed for crimes they had not

committed and criminals were promoted to higher offices. The world has not changed much since the times of Habakkuk.⁴⁹ (

In this turbulent time in history in which Habakkuk served as Israel's prophet [circa 600 BC] many of the confused and bewildered Israelites wondered why God seemed to remain silent, which is to say, why he did not respond in what they deemed to be a timely manner, to their concerns about the prevalence of evil and injustice within the kingdom of Israel and to their absolute terror over the prospect of facing the menacing onslaught of the cruel King Nebuchadnezzar and his vast Babylonian army. But, as scripture tells us, the people were mistaken in their assumption that God was silent or that he was ignoring them, or that he did not care.

Visionary Leadership and the Time of God

Obviously the people of Habakkuk's time did not understand the difference between the time of God and the time of man. American author, Herman Melville has explored this interesting concept in one of his less studied novels entitled "Pierre or The Ambiguities" [1852]. In this novel, Melville speaks through the persona of a character named Plotinus Plinlimmon – who never actually appears in the novel and whose existence is confirmed only by his name on a biblical tract entitled "Chronometricals and

⁴⁹ Schultz, *Commentary on Habakkuk*, accessed December 12, 2015, http://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC_Habakkuk.PDF.

Horologicals,”⁵⁰ which purports to examine the incompatibility of the chronometrical time which prevails on the earth and the horological time which prevails in heaven. According to Melville’s fictitious author, Plinlimmiin, these two conceptions of time operate in totally different dimensions and will never be the same, at least not until the time of earth is abolished and becomes by default the time of heaven, an event which is alluded to in the apocalyptic vision of John of Patmos in the book of Revelations,

And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven, And swore by him that liveth for ever and ever, who created heaven, and the things that therein are, and the earth, and the things that therein are, and the sea, and the things which are therein, that there should be time no longer. Revelations 10: 6.

In the book of Habakkuk, these differences between the operation of time in earth and in heaven are also alluded to by God when he says to Habakkuk, “For the vision is yet for an appointed time,” which is to say, for a time which you cannot see yet because it does not yet exist in the earthly realm, but which God who sees all, can see in the heavenly realm. In this same vein, God also advises Habakkuk that “though it tarry, wait for it,” or in other words allow the time of earth, in which men impatiently wait for God and fear that he will not answer, and the time of heaven, in which all things are simultaneously revealed to the mind of God, to be reconciled.

A comparison of the experience of Habakkuk to that of Mary and Martha in the New Testament will reveal both the way that the concepts found in the book of Habakkuk are precursory to many of the situations which are found in the New Testament.

Habakkuk’s position reminds us of similar circumstances when Martha and Mary called upon Jesus to come and heal their sick brother Lazarus. We read in John’s

⁵⁰ Herman Melville *Pierre or the The Ambiguities* (New York, NY: The Penquin Group, USA, 1996), 204-216.

Gospel: “Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus. So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.”⁸ Neither Habakkuk nor Lazarus’ sisters understood that God’s failure to respond was motivated by His love. This is even more difficult to discern in the case of Habakkuk. The prophet came to the same conclusion as Martha and Mary did; otherwise, he could never have concluded his prophecy with: “Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will be joyful in God my Savior⁵¹.”

Authenticity and Visionary Leadership

The visionary liberation theologian who has faced the reality in his spiritual life of the inconsistencies of the time of man and the time of God, knows that the God who watches over the poor and the oppressed without the need of slumber or sleep, is certainly never tardy or late. In Habakkuk’s case, God also was not silent, because he answered Habakkuk’s lament by his faith instructing him to tell the people of Judah to write a vision of liberation and make it plain on the tablets in their time of oppression. This instruction from God was in keeping with the Old Testament Prophetic tradition in which the revealed word of God came to his people through the medium of the prophet. Obviously, there existed a level of trust between the visionary leader and his congregation to such a degree that the people “recognized” the authenticity of the true revealed word and were more apt to question or reject knowledge which was inconsistent with established religious practice or with the written word of God.

One can see this sense of recognition of “authenticity” of the visionary experience in the case of Saul of Tarsus who is told in the aftermath of the Damascus experience to “Arise and go into the city, and it will be told thee what thou must do.” God emphasizes

⁵¹ Schultz, *Commentary on Habakkuk*, accessed December 12, 2015, http://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC_Habakkuk.PDF.

the authenticity of the visionary experience in the case of Paul, and even goes further by using a similar type of visionary experience with Ananias, which suggests that God makes use of the visionary experience for simultaneous and multiple purposes and on multiple levels. This suggests that while the visionary leader is receiving his over instructions, God may be working through the same type of visionary experience with some of those in the congregation who must play key roles, as did Ananias, in the realization of the vision. In the instance of the simultaneous visionary experiences of both Saul and Ananias described below, authenticity is established by the ability of both participants to recognize “clues” which are given in the vision , such as

1) the exact location of Saul, 2) the fact that Saul is blind, 3) the fact that Saul is at the house of Judas 4) the fact that Saul knows his name is Ananias, 5) the fact that Saul knows that Ananias will restore his sight, and 6) the fact that Ananias will heal him by the laying on of hands.

Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem: And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus. And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God. (Acts 9:10-20)

Ironically, when the Lord comes to Ananias in a vision, Ananias does not doubt the authenticity of the vision or question whether or not it is the Lord God who is communicating to him in this visionary fashion. Still, even though he knows that he is

communicating with the Divine, much like the men in the day of Habakkuk who doubted the constancy of God and feared that God was silent because he had forgotten them or because he did not care about their welfare, Ananias could not resist questioning whether God really wanted him to go and visit that man who was an avowed enemy of the church, a concern, incidentally, which God dismisses and overrules with an authoritative “Go thy way,” a command which Ananias follows without further question, although God does provide him, and through him, the world, with definitive visionary information about his impressive plans for the converted Saul,

For he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.” (Acts 9:15)

This visionary incident is remarkably similar to Habakkuk’s questioning of the wisdom of God in allowing his people to be threatened by such as the unjust King Jehoiakim or the evil Babylonians in that both misunderstandings and misapprehensions are totally corrected in the time of God who is as Habakkuk claimed,

Of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look upon iniquity; why lookest thou upon them [the Babylonians] that deal treacherously and holdest thou tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?”(Habakkuk 2:1)

Conclusion

The emergence of Paul and the earlier commissioning of the disciples is seen by many as a continuation of the tradition of the prophets, which is essentially the continuation of a long line of visionary leaders, but with the theological and scriptural distinctions which separate Judaism from Christianity. Just as the prophets were

recognized as the undisputed links between Yahweh and the people, so too were the disciples set apart both by reason of their intimate and first hand knowledge and experience with Jesus of Nazareth and the visionary terms of the Great Commission,

And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.(Matthew 28:16-20)

In a very similar manner, the Apostle Paul achieved the same kind of “authentication” as that accorded to the prophets before him, largely as a result of his visionary message and the powerful and inspired force of his personality on the thousands who listened to him preach during his five missionary journeys to Asia Minor, Syria, Greece, Italy, Spain, Britain, and elsewhere. Perhaps Paul received his greatest and most lasting authentication through the survival of the epistolary gospel to the Gentile churches which he left behind and which, as early as 300 AD had been fully accepted into the biblical canon and granted the full biblical authority such inclusion required.

This review of the biblical underpinnings of the visionary leadership experiences of both the Prophet Habakkuk and the Apostle Paul show that both are solidly grounded in scripture which reveals them to be closely related biblical types of visionary leaders which, through the invocation of conscious prophetic and unconscious apostolic experience were both led to provide inspired, and vision-centered leadership for the nation of Israel during one of its lowest moments and for the Christian Church at the exact moment in time when the church cried out for a zealous leader to take its message

of salvation to all the world. that experience which are related to the role that visionary leaders are called to play in the ongoing work of the church.

CHAPTER THREE

HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS

. This examination of the history of Macedonia AMEC will range from the broader subject of African Methodism to a more specific discussion of the early development of Macedonia, and the history of the problem of “vision” during the era the church was founded, through the intervening years, and up to the present day. This section will also establish how the work of Bishops Richard Allen, Daniel Alexander Payne, and Henry M. Turner Allen is so relevant and significant to the history of Macedonia, to the state of South Carolina, and to the nation.

This purpose of this historical paper is to establish critical and carefully researched historical data for Macedonia. It is somewhat difficult to write a total history of the creation and early development of Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church without starting off with the founder of African Methodism, Richard Allen. When one examines the life of Allen, one will learn that African Methodist Episcopal church emerged from the depths of slavery, poverty, social, economic and political injustice.

According to Allen,

I was born in the year of our Lord 1760, on February 14th, a slave named Benjamin Chew, of Philadelphia. My mother and father and four children of us were sold into Delaware state, near dover; and I was child and lived with him until I was upwards of twenty years of age, during which time I was awakened and brought to see myself, poor, wretched and undone, and without the mercy of God must be lost. Shortly after, I obtained mercy through the blood of Christ, and was constrained to exhort my old companions to seek the Lord.”¹

¹ Richard Allen, *The Life Experience And Gospel Labors Of The Rt. Rev. Richard Allen* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union/ Legacy Publishing, 1990), 13.

Allen later joined the Methodist Society while he was a slave.

Allen writes,

I joined the Methodist Society and met in class at Benjamin Wells' in the forest, Delaware state. John gray was the class leader. I met in his class for several years. My life was an unconverted man, and all the family, but he was what the world called a good master. He was more like a father to his slaves than anything else. He was very tender, humane man. My mother and father lived with him for many years. He was bought into difficulty, not being able to pay for us, and mother having several children after he had bought us, he sold my mother and three children.²

It was from psychologically painful and helpless situations like this that Allen was ultimately lead to be a devout believer and follower of the social gospel of Jesus Christ. It was during this time, while he was a member of the Methodist Society, that Allen became an exhorter and then later an Itinerant Elder (traveling preacher). Although he still endured the bitter taste of racial discrimination, Allen did not allow anything to hinder him from performing the ultimate Christian duty of his ministry. Allen writes, "My labor was much blessed.³ I soon saw a large field open in seeking and instructing my African brethren, who had been a long forgotten people and few of them attended public worship."⁴ In 1786, Allen formed a society that had at least forty-two members. ⁵ It was also during this time Allen and others were forced to leave St. George's Church. According to Allen,

A number of us usually attended St George's Church in Fourth street; and when the colored people began to get numerous in the church, they moved us from the seats we usually sat on, and placed us around the wall, on the Sabbath morning we went

² Ibid., 14.

³ Ibid., 22.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

to church and the sexton stood at the door, and told us to go in the gallery. He told us to go, and we would see where to sit. We expected to take the seats over the ones we formerly occupied below, not knowing any better. We took those seats. Meeting had begun, and they were nearly done singing, and just as we got to the seats, the elder said, "Let us pray." We had been not been long upon our knees before I heard considerable scuffling and low talking. I raised my head up and saw one of the trustees, having hold of Rev. Absalom Jones, pulling him up off of his knees, and saying, "You must get up—you must not kneel here." Mr. Jones replied, "Wait until prayer is over." Mr. H—M—said, "No you must get up now, or I will call for aid and force you away." Mr. Jones said, "Wait until prayer is over, and I will get up and trouble you no more. By this time prayer was over, and we all went out of the church in a body, and they were no more plagued with us in the church.⁶

From experiences such as this caused Allen to head societies and organizations to help in the fight against racial discrimination through his ministry. In 1787, Allen and others started the Free African Society.

Much of the early history of Macedonia AMEC dates back to 1863 near the end of the Civil War and 1870, about midway through the period of Reconstruction, an era for which for newly emancipated African Americans many formal records were not kept which has led to the extreme difficulty in the present day of acquiring accurate factual information from that time. However, since we are a people of African origin, much of our history has been passed down to us through the oral tradition as it was practiced in Africa, that is, by word of mouth. The written history that is available comes from a variety of sources, including deeds, corner stones, legal documents, and other sources.

Despite the paucity of historical documentation, there is more than enough to draw a clear line of connection between Bishop Richard Allen in 1786 and Macedonia AMEC which in October of 2014 is celebrated over a hundred and forty-years of existence. The

⁶ Ibid., 23.

time frame for the establishment of the founding of Macedonia as being between 1863-1870 can be deduced by the fact that the establishment of institutions specifically designed to meet the needs of the newly emancipated people of color can be dated as far back as 1865 when the Civil War had come to an end. This means that it is extremely unlikely that an AME church would have been erected prior to 1865, which establishes a lower limit for the founding date of Macedonia AMEC. On the other hand, we also know from the historical record that Allen University, an AME institution of higher education was established in 1870 in Cokesbury, SC as Payne Institute, in honor of Bishop Daniel Payne. This institution later relocated to Columbia, SC, which is less than fifty miles from Cope, SC.

In 1870, the South was in the midst of the Reconstruction period and people of color were not only able to vote and but also held many influential positions at many levels of government. It is entirely likely that in that year (1870) Bishop Daniel Payne who was the presiding bishop of the South Carolina Conference and chairman of Board of Trustees of Allen University⁷ probably exerted the influence which led to the expansion of the AME presence in the Orangeburg District of South Carolina through the founding of Macedonia AME Church.

What comes down to us through history is that at some time between 1863 and 1870, the ancestral membership of Macedonia had clearly established themselves as a body of believers who would gather as a church, probably informally between 1863-1865, but on a formal basis after 1865 when the defeat of the South had nullified the restrictions

⁷ Allen University Official Webpage, accessed November 15, 2015, <http://www.allenuniversity.edu/about-us/allens-legacy/>.

outlawing black churches that the South Carolina General Assembly had imposed in the wake of the Denmark Vesey uprising in Charleston in 1834.

According to the members the church, the congregation came into being because of the rapid growth of the African Methodism in South Carolina after the establishment South Carolina Conference. Monday morning, May 16, 1865, Bishop Payne organized the South Carolina conferenced in the colored Presbyterian Church.⁸

According to Chaplain James A. Holmes, Jr and Reverend Richard Allen Leonard,

On January 1, 1863, The Emancipation Proclamation opened the doors for Northern missionary efforts in the south. South Carolina was of particular interest to the African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church as an opportunity to reclaim a fertile area lost to them between 1822 and 1863. Bishop Payne who had become a bishop in 1852, commissioned Rev. James Lynch of the Baltimore Annual Conference and Rev. James D.S. Hall of the New York Annual Conference to perform the work. On May 28, 1863, Lynch and Hall sailed for South Carolina on the government ship, Arago. In addition, there were four white women who went as missionary teachers. The Rev, Lynch's sister was given Bishop Payne's permission to go as a missionary teacher to Beaufort a few days after her brother. She was supported by a white Baptist church in New York city. By 1863 the Union forces occupied Beaufort, Port Royal, Hilton Head, and Edisto Island allowing the missionaries to begin work in those areas. The first congregation organized by the missionaries was Quinn Chapel of Hilton Head in 1863."⁹

Holmes and Leonard also declares,

"Bishop Payne set sail on board the same ship Arago for his native state of South Carolina in 1865. Payne was accompanied by James H.A.Johnson, James A. Handy, and Theophilus G. Steward. Returning to the state on May 12, the first stop on the itinerary was the church built by the missionaries at Hilton head. Perhaps the most emotional step of Bishop Payne's itinerary was the sight of his native city of Charleston. He returned Charleston nearly thirty years from his escape in 1835. Bishop Payne called the members of the underground A.M.E, Church (the remnants of the old African Methodist Episcopal Church of Reid and

⁸ Daniel Payne, A. *The History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church*(Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union/ Legacy Publishing,1998), 469.

⁹F.C. James, *African Methodism in South Carolina, A Bicentennial Focus* (Tappan, NY: Custombook, Ink, 1987), 33.

Hanover Streets in Charleston); the new members organized by missionaries Hall and Lynch of Beaufort, Hilton Head and the surrounding areas; and all interested parties to a Quarterly Conference May 13, 1865 at Zion Presbyterian Church. The quarterly conference was in preparation of organizing the South Carolina Annual Conference. On Sunday, May 14, the old new African Methodist Episcopal members worshipped together at Zion.”¹⁰

Bishop Payne preached from the Phillipians 2:5 “Let the mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.” On Monday the pioneers of the church reassembled at Zion. Bishop Payne called the house to order, religious services were conducted, and the South Carolina Annual Conference was organized with officers and committees.¹¹ Holmes and Leonard also proclaims, “of particular interest was the reassembling of the first African Methodist Episcopal congregation of Reid and Hanover Streets. They named the congregation Emmanuel (God be with us) as he was them at birth and during the underground church period. Emmanuel would return to prominence and influence in Charleston and become a premier connectional African Methodist Episcopal congregation. A northern missionary, the Rev. Richard Harvey Cain (1826-1887) was appointed pastor. Many churches sprang into existence as if by some mystical power under his command. He found churches in Charleston, Summerville, Lincolnville, Georgetown, Marion, Sumter, and other places.”¹²

Macedonia continues to give God the praise because God sent Bishop Payne and others such as Rev. R.H. Cain to renew African Methodism in the state of South Carolina. During their tenure, African Methodism spread through the low and central country of South Carolina receiving masses of congregants, churches and circuits everywhere in the

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 422.

state of South Carolina. Under the leadership of Bishop Payne, Macedonia and Good Hope AME Churches were founded. Good Hope and Macedonia were founded in 1863 according to Good Hope AME Church historical records.¹³ According to records,

Good Hope's first pastor was Rev. Goings and its first presiding elder was Rev. Pruitt. Daniel Payne was the first Bishop. The church property was donated on account the economic condition was poor because people were just emerging from out of slavery. They were very religious however, and made their very first church from a tent. The Senior and Junior Missionary Societies were organized and had their first summer camp on church grounds.¹⁴

The reason why the histories of Good Hope AMEC and Macedonia AMEC are so intermingled is that they both were started at roughly the same time according to what has been passed down through the oral history tradition by members of both church congregations. For one thing, for many years both churches operated as members of the same a circuit, which is a collective term, implying several churches or charges under one minister, who has the spiritual oversight of them all, goes round among them on alternating Sundays, and is often denominated circuit-rider.¹⁵ According to Bishop Henry McNeil Turner in his book, "Methodist Polity"

There is a scriptural precedent for circuit traveling. "It is written of Samuel the prophet: "And he went from year to year in a circuit to Bethel and Gilgal and Mizpeh, and judged Israel in all places, and his return was to Ramah."¹⁶

Bishop Turner further states,

Circuits differ in size. In thinly inhabited regions a circuit may be one or two hundred miles around; in thickly settled regions ten or fifteen miles. There are two

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Henry Turner, M. *Methodist Polity* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 1885 Reprinted 1986), 44.

¹⁶ Ibid.

circuits, three week circuits and four week circuits; four weeks is the longest limit; circuit ministers should have mid-week services also.¹⁷

It was this practice of shared circuit ministry and worship that Macedonia practiced for many years, sharing with Good Hope, its sister AME church, the same pastor. This circuit arrangement was a practical necessity both because of the long distances between sparsely populated rural congregations and the high cost to each congregation of establishing and maintaining a totally independent house of worship and employing its own full time pastor. Bishop Turner claims,

Because the laborers are few, and by the means of the people get the gospel who otherwise would not. And more, the Lord has ordained that those who preach the gospel shall live by the gospel, and the churches are often so poor that several of them must be joined together in order to support a pastor.”¹⁸

During the early beginnings of Macedonia AMEC, the membership was not economically able to support a pastor who ministered solely to the Macedonia flock, but in spite of this disadvantage, they were still able to have a place of worship on a fairly regular, rotating basis, which was for the membership, a blessing. This blessing was largely made possible because of the fact that between 1863-1870, after liberation from slavery and from the difficulties of war, African Methodism was spreading like wildfire in South Carolina. The church sent missionaries to the South from various places. In Clarence E. Walker's book, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, he states

Altogether the church sent a total of seventy-seven missionaries in the south between 1863 and 1870. Because most did not leave records, it is impossible to

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

make statements about the group as a whole, but some permits some generalization concerning their backgrounds, education and abilities.¹⁹

Upon entering the South, the A.M.E. missionaries conceived of themselves as “obeying the Providence of God rushing foremost into the field of missionary effort, and gathering in the Methodist who were as sheep without shepherds, in consequence of the rage of Civil War.”²⁰ Macedonia was a part of this experience because when all of this was taking place Macedonia was a part of the South Carolina conference. According to official AME Church history, church records which document the founding of Emmanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church, a church located in Cope, South Carolina which is within a ten mile radius of Macedonia:

Emmanuel A.M.E. Church was organized in the Canaan Community of Cope in 1865. It was originally in the South Carolina Conference and the Charleston District with the Rev. L.W.C. Mintz, pastor; Richard Harvey Cain, presiding elder; and Rt. Rev. Daniel Payne, bishop.²¹

When Macedonia was founded, it was in the South Carolina Conference because during the year of its founding the entire state of South Carolina was one conference according to the history of the church. In 1867, the boundaries of the South Carolina Annual Conference were confined to the state of South Carolina.²²

It was meant for Macedonia to be African Methodist because the leaders and members of the church had such great interest and concern about many of the key

¹⁹ Clarence Walker, E. *A Rock in a Weary Land* (Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1982), 50.

²⁰ Ibid., 51.

²¹ James, *African Methodism in South Carolina A Bicentennial Focus*, 422.

²² Ibid.

characteristics of the African Methodist Church: a deep concern for their relationship with God, and the social, economic, political uplift and development of people of color. The Reverend Richard Harvey Cain who was Macedonia's presiding elder in 1865 wrote,

“Heaven has graciously opened the way for the spreading of our beloved Zion in that land. ”²³ The time had come, asserted Cain, “for the church to spread her curtains, and lengthen her cords, and gather in her long neglected children.

The founding members of Macedonia were some of the children that were gathered up as the church literally, spread her curtains and lengthened her cords. As presiding Elder Cain saw with his own eyes as he circuited the churches of South Carolina, the members of Macedonia were hard working farmers, who toiled on the land in order to survive. At first, Presiding Elder Cain was not pleased with what he had seen. According to Clarence Walker,

When Cain arrived in South Carolina, he was ambivalent about the ability of the freedmen to survive. After working with them for a while, he changed his altitude and wrote to the Christian Recorder that “the progress of the freedmen [was] beyond the most sanguine expectations of their friends.” The freedmen’s “industry, perseverance, earnestness in working their crops and securing means of comfort are unprecedented.” All their crops were excellent and “everyone is anxious to become independent of the charities of the government as well as the benevolent societies of the North.”²⁴

The members of Macedonia were some of the farming people whose crops were generally excellent, as a result of the expertise they had developed and refined over many years of successful farming in the Cope community, where cotton had always been a major crop. In electing to affiliate with African Methodism, many church historians feel that

²³ Walker, *A Rock in a Weary Land*, 51.

²⁴ Ibid., 55.

Macedonia's decision was informed at least by Divine intent and confirmed and cemented by the strong natural affinity of beliefs shared by the Macedonia membership and the African Methodists, such their common understanding of the mission and vision of the church, and their similar beliefs in a theology infused with service to God and the empowerment of man. Throughout its long history, Macedonia has always participated in and strongly supported the educational, social, or economic needs of people in the community and throughout the African Methodist connectional church..

In the 1860's when the church first started, the underground services were held under a tent or in the home of one of the members. The services always commenced with singing and prayer services. During this time, many of the members could not read, which was not a great problem since there were so few printed materials. Like many congregations composed of people of color, the Macedonia membership excelled in committing to memory with uncanny precision, every single word of elaborate prayers as well as spirituals, and multiple stanzas of spirituals the hymns remembered from the worship services which many had previously attended in segregated areas, and under the legally required supervision, of white churches. The musical instrumentation included good old fashion feet stomping and hand clapping, the tapping of wood blocks, the beating of tambourines, the beating of a wash tub, which the former slaves used to gather closely around in the belief that it captured and concealed the sounds of their secret, forbidden worship.

Soon after the conclusion of the Civil War, the members of Macedonia constructed a large wooden structure in which to hold services. According to one Macedonia member, Brother Timmerson Johnson whose remarks are based on his recollection of the stories told

by his grandfather, the church sat one hundred yards from the present location and had outside toilets. There was a wooden house that was used as a parsonage behind the left side of the church. Even though the people of color of the Cope community were going through adversity, they still embraced the vision that Bishop Allen had envisioned for the church as well as the “vision” Daniel Payne had for African Methodism in the South. The members of Macedonia envisioned a church where their family and friends in the community could come together under the banner of Christ to fight against the injustice of social, economic, and political oppression.

The members who founded Macedonia were faced with social oppression because they were just coming out of slavery, and had suffered the unimaginable disappointment over the wholesale failure of Reconstruction. They were also disheartened by the emergence of violent organizations like the Red Shirts and the KKK and the revival of oppressive Jim Crow laws. They were also discouraged by the many obstacles which continued to prevent them from receiving a proper education. Economically they were oppressed due to low wages or no wages at all from farming their own land or share cropping. The majority of them had come away from slavery with virtually nothing to show for generations of labor, except the tattered clothing on their backs and the irony that they finally were free.

Politically the people were oppressed. They had witnessed the vote which they had universally been granted at the end of the Civil War and which they used to elect their own representatives, illegally denied to them again. When the last protective federal soldiers had been ordered to leave the South in 1877, the South was free to return to nearly all its previous injustices, except outright slavery. According to the testimony of elder members

of Macedonia, it was during these unpredictable times, “when hope unborn had died,” that the church maintained a spark of hope in the community as it became a safe haven for community meetings, schooling, and organizing political affairs. Macedonia became active in the fight for social justice because the members knew they were a part of a church that emerged from a long tradition of resistance to social, economic, and political oppression.

After the destruction of the wooden structure, services were held in the homes of various church members, such as Brother James York and sister Ruth Sumpter. During this period, the members raised the funding they would need to build a new church home. It appears that the land belonging to Macedonia was purchased in lots. One lot was purchased on July 12, 1920, from T.M. Stuckey, M.D and Aline Kearse Stuckey. The land was finally given to the trustees of Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church, who included Brothers George Bowman, Lawson Graves, Wade Hampton, John Brown, Robert Conner, Simeal Connor, and George Salley. According to church records, the deed was signed and sealed by E.E. Ritter, Notary Public of the State of South Carolina.

A year later Macedonia was transferred to the jurisdiction of the Central Conference of South Carolina. The Central conference was organized under the leadership of Bishop William David Chappelle.²⁵ Furthermore, “this conference was formed by shifting members from the South Carolina, Columbia, and Northeast conferences. The first session of the Central Conference was held in Manning, South Carolina, November 22, 1921, with Rev. R.E. Brogdon as secretary and Bishop Chappelle presiding.”²⁶ According to the

²⁵ James, *African Methodist in South Carolina: A Bicentennial Focus*, 43.

²⁶ Ibid.

testimony of older members, construction of the new church began in the 1960's. Several dedicated members were responsible for building this sanctuary which still stands today.

CHAPTER FOUR

THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

The history, experiences, and beliefs of Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church are all rooted in the common theological foundation of liberation. In the era of Richard Allen, the founder of African Methodism, men and women of color in America were an oppressed and marginalized community of people who historically had been ostracized by the successive and overlapping dynamics of slavery, racism, and social injustice. Living under circumstances like these compelled Richard Allen to look more introspectively than he ever previously had, at himself, at the entire community of oppressed people of color and at the oppressors from whom iron rule liberation was clearly needed. It was in this manner that Allen first came fully to the realization that he was marginalized and second, that he was a part of a community of people who were being dehumanized by a dominant people and culture. In his own words, Allen wrote, “

I was born in the year of our Lord 1760, on February 14th a slave to Benjamin Chew, of Philadelphia. My mother and father and four children of us were sold into Delaware state, near Dover; and I was a child and lived with him until I was upwards of twenty years of age, during which time I was awakening and bought to see myself, poor, wretched and undone, and without of God must be lost. Shortly after, I obtained mercy through the blood of Christ, and was constrained to exhort my old companions to seek the Lord.¹

Allen words, exemplifies his personal decision to address the issue of oppression through the means of God’s divine liberation and to encourage others in his community to

¹ Richard Allen, *The Life and Experiences of Richard Allen* (Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union/Legacy Publishing, 1990), 1.

do the same. The history of the black church, especially its African Methodist branch, has been devoted to this process since the eighteenth century. Since its inception in 1787, the historical mission of the African Methodist Episcopal Church has always been strongly committed to the abolishment of dehumanization in all forms, but especially the abolishment of the particular dehumanization that had been suffered by people of color who were served by the African Methodist Episcopal Church.

The response of the AME Church was in keeping with a much broader response of the greater awareness of religious communities around the world to the problem of dehumanization as well as more concrete evidences of an accompanying passion to be engaged in the process of liberation and humanization of humankind. In his book, “Pedagogy of the Oppressed,” Paulo Freire notes that: from an axiological view, “The problem of humanization has always. . .been humankind’s central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern. Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as ontological possibility but as a historical reality.”² Freire also believes that while “humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people’s vocation.”³ Freire also notes that although in reality the vocation of humanization has constantly been negated, yet it is ironically affirmed by that very negation: “[To much the same degree that] it is thwarted by injustice, exploitation, oppression, and the violence of the oppressors; it is [likewise] affirmed by the

² Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2005), 43.

³ Ibid.

yearning of the oppressed for freedom and justice, and by their struggle to recover their lost humanity,”⁴

To understand Friere’s declaration that humanization “is the peoples vocation,” it is necessary to examine more closely the idea of vocation (work) in the theologically based context of the scripture, liberation, and survival through the agency of theological reflection. The schools of thought of Liberation Theology, Black Liberation Theology, and Womanist Theology will be examined as part of a larger investigation of the connection between scripture and the experiences of the poor and oppressed, not only as a source of history and context, but also as a source of theology.

In addition, the biblical theme of Habakkuk 2:1-4 will be used as a source of scripture and biblical revelation concerning liberation theology, particularly as we examine the ways in which social existence and survival are fundamental to the liberation vocations of Bishops Richard Allen and Daniel Alexander Payne in their concurrent struggle against the dehumanization of black people and in pursuit of the humanization of all men. This scripture from the book of Habakkuk is important because of the way it couples the sophistication of Habakkuk’s vocational theology with the brutal oppression and rank injustice which was the daily dehumanizing experience of the poor, wretched, and oppressed. The primary goal of this study will be to demonstrate the way that we can use the varied pathways of theology, scripture, history, and contextual meaning in revealing a deeper understanding of the liberation and the humanization of suffering humankind in marginalized communities throughout the world.

⁴ Ibid., 44.

In order to present this study in an appropriate manner, the definitions, vocations, and notions of theology and liberation will be presented in various interpretations, which some theologians, such as Gustavo Guitierrez, a Peruvian theologian and Dominican priest widely known and highly regarded as the Father of Liberation Theology, feel that in order to have a successful discussion on theology, it is necessary and appropriate to have a clear consensus as to terminology. More specifically, Guitierrez believes that “theology and liberation are terms subjected to a variety of interpretations. In order to present our study properly and clearly, we must examine critically the notion of theology. Likewise, it is necessary to determine, at least [by means of] a rough outline, what it is we understand by the term liberation.”⁵

Both of these terms, theology and liberation, will be used throughout this study in the unique ways they are employed by various biblical scholars, theologians, and schools of thought that provide critical reflections of sophisticated exegesis of scripture connected to social, economic, and political oppressions of different people. This study will also investigate the connections between these reflections and the specific issues of race (ethnic group), class (poor), and gender (women). Resources for this study which focuses on the African Methodist Episcopal Church experience, will be obtained from sources associated with theological reflection, scripture, and sources indigenous to and within the context of the African American experience.

For the purposes of this study, various definitions of theology and liberation, as they are articulated by several biblical scholars and theologians will be employed. In their

⁵ Ibid., 1.

book “Introduction to Theology,” authors and theologians Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra provide the following definition of theology,

Theology, in one of the ways we have defined it, is the analysis and clarification of the key categories, images, or organizing principles of Christian faith, namely, the rich picture of God, creation, and salvation manifest in the testimony of the Bible. Then the larger task of theology, sometimes called Christian philosophy, is the interpretation of human experience in the light of the central categories, images, and ideas of Christian faith. It must be noted that the “human experience” is itself a multifaceted and variable category, encompassing not only what happens to people, but how they interpret these events. Such interpretation arises out of the language and symbols, cultures and worldviews, social and political systems, and understandings of social location (such as gender, race, class, age, ability, sexual orientation) in which each person makes of these contextual factors, that is, by the person’s inner life and all that shapes it. Thus the larger task of theology as interpretation of human experience requires theologians to be conversant not only with philosophy, but also with art, literature, and the sciences, each of which presents aspects of the human experience in a richly diverse way.⁶

In the view of these and other thinkers, theology has grown from its traditional form by leaps and bounds into a multi-faceted, multi-disciplinary methodology specifically for the study of the Christian faith. In this study, the focus will be on contextualized theology which focuses on the broader setting in which each studied person, place or event is found in an effort to gain a fuller understanding of that person, place, or event through a concurrent knowledge and understanding of the many contributory forces which act upon it. Thomas and Wondra make the following observation about the study of theology through the methodological approach of contextualization,

A major hallmark of late-twentieth and early twenty-first-century theology has been interest in exploring and presenting how particular sociocultural and racial/ethnic groups experience the Christian faith, and how they express it. There is growing appreciation that the Christian message is received, appropriated, and conveyed in terms that are apt to faith communities’ particular circumstances and history, and

⁶ Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondra, *Introduction to Theology* (Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 2002), 6.

to their relations with other dominant communities. Thus, the last several decades have seen the emergence and development of black or African American theology, Asian theology, feminist theology, and many more. In each case, theologians bring many resources to bear-social, political, and economic theories, theories of gender, and so forth-as they reflect on the Christian message and on how their own faith communities understand it.⁷

For this work, Liberation Theology, Black Theology, and Womanist Theology will all be examined from the theological viewpoint of contextualization which will allow for a close examination of all social, political, economic and other forces which are relevant to a liberating theological discussion. From these different perspectives, theologians develop new ways for understanding sources of theology in the praxis of liberation, based on the social, economic, and political experiences of oppressed people who experience injustice in their community, society, or country. This new way of studying theology presents various explanations and approaches through come through the study of scripture, personal experience, and a knowledge of history on the liberating vocation of the humanization of humankind which is essential for its survival.

All biblical scholars look at scripture, experience, and history as a source of “survival” and as a means of “liberation” which allows them to engage in theological reflection. When he defines liberation theology as “a critical reflection on Christian praxis in light of the word of God, “ Guiterrez, the acknowledged founder of this theological approach, implies that there is more to be gained in terms of a theology of liberation which opens new pathways to justice for oppressed people than will be lost in terms of reducing or debasing theology by connecting it to the dcontext of the life of the believer, when he

⁷ Ibid., 7.

notes that “The point . . . was not to try to reduce the riches of a quest to a short definition, but rather to point out a path to be followed.”⁸

Gutierrez also believes that, “in many different ways the Bible shows us that the doing of God’s will is the main demand placed on believers.” Karl Barth echoed this idea when he said that “the true hearer of the word is the one who puts it into practice.”⁹

Gutierrez agrees with Barth’s idea about the importance of good works in liberation theology, and, pragmatically extends it a step further with the observation that not only must these liberating acts be done on behalf of the oppressed, but they also must be done by the oppressed, themselves, which is to say that ultimately, the oppressed must litigate and act on their own behalf,

I accepted this traditional datum of Christian revelation because I was moved by the witness of those who were beginning to commit themselves ever more fully to the process of freeing the poor from the various servitudes from which they suffer. This commitment reflected the experience of the oppressed themselves ever more freely to the process themselves, who were beginning to become the agents of their own destiny.¹⁰

This notion of the commitment of the oppressed to their own liberation created a school of thought of liberation theology which arose both as a direct reaction and as a direct response to the social, economic, and political forces which shaped the lives of oppressed peoples throughout the world. In the AME church, people of color were led to make a commitment to their own liberation through the peculiar and particular medium of their spirituality as this theology was expressed by the African Methodism theological foundations of the

⁸ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), xxix.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

church. Bishop Allen and others taught their flocks to use this theology of liberation even in the darkest and most hopeless of times as a divine source of spirituality which, like the mana of old, met, not only their spiritual needs, but also became critical to all aspects of their survival, spiritual and otherwise.

Their survival in face of such strong oppression served the oppressed people of Bishop Allen's AME Church as concrete and continuing evidence of the substance of their faith. They saw this in their liberating and otherworldly spirituality which emphasized a world in a dimension beyond this one. They also saw it in their actual physical liberation, which many lived to verify. They were symbolically liberated in 1863 by the Emancipation Proclamation, a document which was totally disregarded in the South; and were legally liberated in 1865 with the termination of the institution of slavery at the end of the Civil War.

These historical facts regarding the role of the AME Church in terms of embracing a theology of are important because they document the transcendence of lives of oppressed people over injustice, poverty, and oppression. Another concrete evidence of the realization of the liberation prayed for and practices in its theology by the AME church, is the fact that the black church was able for the first time in more than 30 years to build their own houses of worship and to independently conduct their on worship services. The gathering of large groups of African Americans unsupervised by whites had been prohibited in 1834 following the insurrection of Denmark Vesey at Mother Emmanuel Church in Charleston, SC. The restoration of this independence of worship meant that one of the first fruit of liberation for the AME Church was the right to live and worship with dignity, pride, and freedom.

Liberation theology also promoted a de-emphasis on traditional concepts of sin which tended to imprison rather than liberate the human spirit, as well as increased self-awareness, and a motivation to work with others. In other words, “Liberation Theology” caused the people to be engaged in a spirituality of liberation which is placed solidly in the context of their social, political, and economic environment and which is based on a theological consideration of the scripture, context, and experience. Gutierrez was expert on these aspects of liberation theology because of his extensive and direct experience with the revolutionary struggle of the oppressed people of South America, and learned from personal experience how to wed his theology with his concern for his own liberation and for the liberation of his community and his country from oppression.

He believes,

To place oneself in the perspective of the Kingdom means to participate in the struggle for the liberation of those oppressed by others. This is what many Christians who have committed themselves to the Latin American revolutionary process have begun to experience.¹¹

In his book, “Theology of Liberation,” Gutierrez called attention to the poor in Latin America and challenged his church to active participation in changing the social, economic, and political systems that fostered social injustice. As a methodology, he uses the poor Latin Americans economic issues caused by the capitalism that took place under an unjust system of serfdom. Beginning with the liberationist notion of theology as a critical reflection from the standpoint of economics, Gutierrez endorses a re-reading of Latin American history by using his assumption of God’s involvement in human history

¹¹ Ibid., 116-117.

throughout the Hebrew Scriptures as a guideline for re-interpreting the history of his country.

In this re-interpretation, it is seen that the dynamics of the capitalist economy have unjustly lead to the establishment of a center and a periphery, simultaneously generating progress and growing wealth for the few while generating social imbalances, political tensions, and poverty for the many. Latin America was born and developed in this context, which for Guterrez and the oppressed people he represents, is the singular authority of the Catholic Church.¹²

Guterrez believes,

The Latin American Church has lived and to a large extent continues to live as a ghetto church. The Latin American Christian community came into being during the Counter-reformation and has always been characterized by its defensive attitude as regards of faith. This posture was reinforced in some cases by the hostility of the liberal and anticlerical movements of the nineteenth century and, more recently, by strong criticism from those struggling to transform the society to which the Church is so tightly linked.¹³

This hostility led the Church to seek the support of the established order and economically powerful groups in order to face its adversaries and assure for itself what it believed to be an opportunity to preach the gospel peacefully.”¹⁴ Guterrez also believes, the Church avoids placing itself above this reality, but rather attempts to assume its responsibility for the injustice which it has supported both by its links with established order as well as by its silence regarding the evils this order implies.¹⁵

¹² Ibid., 51.

¹³ Ibid., 58.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Gustavo Gutierrez defines theology as "critical reflection on historical praxis." He contends that the study of theology requires that the theologian immerses himself in his own intellectual and sociopolitical history. Furthermore, Gutierrez, theology is not a system of timeless truths, engaging the theologian in the repetitious process of systematization and apologetic argumentation; rather it is a dynamic, ongoing exercise involving contemporary insights into knowledge (epistemology), man (anthropology), and history (social analysis).¹⁶ For Gutierrez, "praxis" means more than the application of theological truth to a given situation, on the experiential level it means the discovery and the formation of theological truth out of a given historical situation through personal participation in the Latin American class struggle for a new socialist society. This new society, transformed by the power of a liberationist theology is the contextual basis for Gutierrez book, "A Theology of Liberation," which laid the foundation for scholars in other countries to develop other schools of thought of Liberation concerning others based on their unique history, context, and experiences.

James Cone, the founder of "Black Liberation Theology" approaches the study of this form of liberation theology which concerns black people in much the same manner as that employed by Gutierrez in his exposition of liberation theology which concerns Latin people. Cone employed the black experience as a source of theology because he believes that the truth, as it applies to black people, must be found within the black experience. Cone says, "there is no truth for and about black people that does not emerge out of the context of their experience. To Cone and others, truth which applies to black people and

¹⁶ Ibid.

their spiritual lives, is essentially, black truth, which is disclosed in the history and culture of black people. This means that there can be no Black Theology which does not trace its starting point back to the black experience.

Thus, Black Liberation Theology, like other forms of liberation theology, all reflect the ability of an omnipotent God to speak the universal truth to each group of his people in ways that are particular and unique to them, much in the same way that God spoke the remarkable news of Pentecost to each man according to his own tongue which derived from his unique race or culture. In this sense, Black Theology is a theology which is rooted in the Divine, but which is specifically of and for black people; it is an examination of the stories, tales, and sayings of black people. Cone claims,

It is an investigation of the mind, delving deeply into the raw materials of our pilgrimage, telling the story of “how we got over.” For theology to be black, in its reflections, it must reflect upon what it means to be black. Black Theology must uncover the structures and forms of the black experience, because the categories of interpretation must arise out of the thought forms of the black experience itself.”¹⁷

The emergence of Black Theology in the wake of the Latino Theology espoused by Guitierrez, encouraged and allowed female and male scholars to begin to explore the school of thought of “Womanist Theology,” which provided a much-needed outlet to address the issues concerning the black women and men based on history, context, and experience

. In her prototypic book, “Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk,” which takes as its central metaphor Hagar, the African mother of Ishmael who was cast away in the desert, yet was protected by God whose blessings caused her son to father a great nation, author Delores S. Williams makes the following observation:

¹⁷ James Cone, *God of the Oppressed* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003), 16-17.

Womanist theology emerged from what many of us saw as characteristic of black women's experience of relation, loss, gain, faith, hope, celebration and defiance. While its aim is discourse and work with black women in the churches, it also brings black women's experience into the discourse of all Christian theology, from which it has previously been excluded. Womanist theology attempts to help black women see, affirm and have confidence in the importance of their experience and faith for determining the character of the Christian religion in the African- American community. Womanist theology challenges all oppressive forces impeding black women's struggle for survival and for the development of a positive, productive quality of life conducive to women's and the family's freedom and well-being. Women theology opposes all oppression based on race, sex, class, sexual preference, physical disability and caste.¹⁸

Under the auspices of Womanist Theology, which explores the intersection of injustice and oppression on race, gender, and class, theologians are creating new ways for developing sources of theology in the praxis of liberation, which presents various explanations and approaches through scripture and theology for the humanization of humankind and its "survival" through "liberation." Perhaps what we mean by "survival" and by "liberation" in this discussion of Black and Womanist Liberation Theology has been best captured by theologian Carroll A. Warkins Ali, in her book, "Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in an African American Context," in which she defines survival and liberation respectively, as follows,

Survival is the ability of African Americans (1) to resist systematic oppression and genocide and (2) to recover the self, which entails a psychological recovery from the abuse and dehumanization of political oppression and exploitation as well as recovery from abuse and dehumanization of political oppression and exploitation as well as recovery of African heritage, culture, and values that were repressed during slavery." . Liberation is total freedom from all kinds of oppression for African descendants of slaves and (2) the ability of African Americans as a people

¹⁸ Delores S. Williams, *Sisters in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God-Talk* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005), xiv.

to self-determine and engage in the process of transformation of the dominant oppressive culture through political resistance.¹⁹

These extended definitions will be used in the formulation of a strategic plan to which will allow scholars and theologians to delve into the historical context of the black church (African Methodism) using the black experience as a source of theology and history.

Likewise, the biblical theme of Habakkak 2:1-4 will be used as a source in this study of Liberation Theology. In this biblical text one clearly sees that the prophet Habakkak consciously employs the mechanism of survival which he uses to seek the presence of God despite rampant oppression, despite the fact that the Israelites suffered from social, economic, and political injustice on an unprecedented scale. In the text, Habakkak cries out to God in lament over the dehumanization of his people which has come about as a result of the systematic oppression and genocide by the Babylonian powers and cultures. Habakkak was seeking an understanding from God about how his people could attain the liberation they continuously sought. In the midst of Habakkak's lament, he understood that God had not been silent as some had thought, but that God had heard his voice and the voice of all his oppressed children and had, even in the midst of lament, provided a response. He answered Habakkuk's lament by his faith and used him as an agent of liberation theology instructing him to tell the people of Judah to write a vision of liberation and make it plain on the tablets in their time of social, economic, and political oppression. In moments such as these throughout the history of Israel, God used prophets to reveal what he wanted spoken or revealed during the times when the people

¹⁹ Carroll A. Watkins Ali, *Survival and Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1999), 2.

suffered oppression, abuse, poverty and slavery. There is no question that the response given through the prophets was always grounded in liberating social activism. For example, as Gustavo Gutierrez correctly maintains, “the prophets condemned every kind of abuse, every form of keeping the poor in poverty or creating a new poor.”²⁰

By examining the text which includes Habakkuk’s sorrowful calling out to God with his heartbreaking concerns about the welfare of his people, his condemnation of the dehumanization of his oppressed community, and, finally, with his answer from God. It is by examining all the parts of this discourse that one can discover how God used Habakkuk as His voice or agent and used him to establish authority by drawing directly upon the instruction provided by God and designed to help the people to address the social, economic, and political oppression of the Babylonians. These divine instructional words provided a theology which liberated the people and equipped them to be more grounded in their faith, mission, and vision in a manner consistent with God’s will, purpose, and authority.

In the text, Habakkuk uses the words, “Then the Lord replied,” which

Walter Bruggeman claims,

This formula intends to establish authority, including the king. Over several centuries a variety of such holy utterances were voiced in Israel. These words were treasured, remembered, and collected by other members of the community, collections that were edited and eventually became scrolls (books) of the Bible.²¹

²⁰ Gustavo Gutierrez, *A Liberation Theology of History, Politics, and Salvation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), 167.

²¹ Walter Brueggeman, *Reverberations of Faith: Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* (Louisville, Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 119.

The biblical theme of Habbakkuk 2:1-4, exemplifies a divine freedom of liberation for self (Habakkuk) and a community of people (the Israelites), who were oppressed. As scholars, theologians, and students of liberation theology, a continuation of biblical interpretation of the Old Testament, in relation to social context and Divine revelation must be examined. Liberation theologian, James Cone, in his book, “God of the Oppressed,” who calls this special set of relationships, “The Social Context of Divine Revelation in the Old Testament,” notes,

The social context of theology is not only evident in our language as human beings with certain political and social interest; it is also implied in the nature of divine revelation. Unlike the God of Greek philosophy who is “removed from history, the God of the Bible is involved in history, and God’s revelation is inseparable from the social and political affairs of Israel. Theology therefore is interested in speech not simply because theologians are creatures of time, but because Yahweh, the God of the Exodus and of Jesus Christ, is the Subject of its discourse. God is the political God, the Protector of the poor and the Establisher of the right for those who are oppressed. To know God is to experience the acts of God in the concrete affairs and relationships of people, liberating the weak and the helpless from pain and humiliation. For theologians to speak of this God, they too must become interested in politics and economics, recognizing that there is no truth about Yahweh unless it is the truth of freedom as that event is revealed in the oppressed people’s struggles for justice in this world.²²

As people concerned with the welfare of all humankind and as human beings, one must want a freedom of liberation for all who are oppressed in much the same manner as Habakkuk wanted liberation for himself and his oppressed community. As theologian, visionary, leader, pastor or laity, one must participate in the work and praxis of liberation in one their communities, societies, or countries. When that understanding becomes transparent, one can began to see, liberation as freedom in relation not only on the individual level for themselves, but also on the communal level in terms of freedom for

²² Cone, *God Of the Oppressed*, 57.

people everywhere who suffer from oppression. James Cone believes that one must look at “liberation as freedom in relation to self and the community of the oppressed.”²³

In the biblical text of Habakkuk, the quest for liberation is expressed from scripture by the words Habakkuk uses in his agony for liberation. It is here where one sees that which James Cone says, “liberation is an expression of the image of God,”²⁴ Cone believes that liberation theology must,

Affirm that liberation is an expression of God is to say not only who God is but also who I am and who my people are. Liberation is knowledge of self; it is a vocation to affirm who I am created to be. Furthermore, it is clear from divine revelation as witness I scripture that authentic liberation of self is attainable only in context of an oppressed community in the struggle of freedom. Because God’s freedom for humanity is the divine liberation of the oppressed from bondage, human freedom as response to God’s gracious liberation is an act for our sisters and brothers who are oppressed. There can be no real freedom for in isolation from the humiliated and the abused. There can be no real freedom for God unless the hungry are fed, sick are healed, and justice is given for the poor.²⁵

The biblical theme of liberation as expressed in Habakkuk 2:1-4 is therefore a source which makes use of both the need for those actions which will ensure the survival of God’s people in the social context the suffering and oppression visited upon Israel during the day of Habakkuk.

There is great commonality between the theme of liberation through survival in the context of oppression which is expressed in Habakkuk and those same themes as employed by Liberation Theology, Black Theology, and Womanist Theology. Through the vision of men like Bishop Richard Allen, who laid an early foundation for a theology

²³ Ibid., 134-135.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

of liberation in the AME Church, at various moments in history, all of these diverse pathways have served as sources of inspiration for the black experience and instruction for the black church. Macedonia was founded during a time where blacks were seeking a means of survival and liberation because they feared the terrible realities of slavery, poverty, racism, and classism, which caused them suffer from socioeconomic and political oppression.

When one examines the historical, survival, and liberation factors which are inherent to African Methodism, one will see that the liberationist vocations (work), commitment (devotion), and experiences (involvement) of AME Church leaders like Bishops Allen and Payne can be used as sources for critical thinking regarding Liberation theology, Black theology, and Womanist Theology. It is obvious they both used their work, devotion, and experiences as a source of theology which expressed itself through its involvement with oppression in general and with the particular problems caused by slavery, Jim Crow, and segregation in particular. Both Bishops Allen and Payne expressed their concern through their active and liberating visions of God's response to the suffering and oppression being experienced by the African Methodist church and its people.

When one look at the history and experiences of Richard Allen, they will discover that Allen took the time to engage in deeply prayful and thoughtful introspective investigation of himself and his community and particularly on how they were being subjugated to slavery, racism, and social injustices. By looking at the history and the social, economic and political context in which the church found itself in 1787 when he was denied the opportunity to worship with a white congregation, Allen came to a full

realization of his personal marginalization and the marginalization of his church and the entire community of believers among people of color by a dominant people and culture,

Certainly, based on his personal experiences, Allen had a first hand awareness of the dehumanization of blacks due to slavery and a highly informed understanding of the effects it had on others besides himself. He writes,

I had it often impressed upon my mind that I should one day enjoy my freedom; for slavery is a bitter pill, notwithstanding we had a good master. But when would think that our day's work is never done, we often thought after the master's death we were liable to be sold to the highest bidder, as he was much in debt; and thus my troubles were increased, and I was often bought to weep between the porch and alter. But I had reason to bless my dear Lord that the door was opened unexpectedly for me to buy my time and enjoy my liberty.²⁶

In this instance, Allen's vision seems to arise from Allen's consciousness of the oppressiveness of slavery and the nature human yearning for freedom. Even though he was suffering from the oppression of slavery, he still experienced the divine liberation of God. Although Allen was compelled to seek his liberty in the midst of the disadvantages brought about by his marginalization and injustice, his mission for freedom through liberation which encourages prescriptive and corrective action, still managed to prevail. From this victory came the inexplicable but undeniably authentic vision of future liberation for himself and his people and for the right of the church he founded to serve God as free community (society).

Bishop Allen's life, religious experience, and gospel efforts established not only a historical context for African Methodism, but also provided a foundational home or point of origin for blacks to engage in a meaningful way in the study of theology. Through the

²⁶Richard Allen, *The Life and Experiences of Richard Allen*, 16.

religious context of African Methodism, theologians today like James Cone and Jacquelyn Grant Collier were able to engage in the methodological approach to theology and contextualization by using Allen's struggle for freedom, the black church, and the black experience as a source of theology. Leaders such as Bishop Payne used the writings and experiences of Bishop Allen to inaugurate the history of the African Methodist Episcopal Church, which served as a testament to the efficacy of liberation theology even in the church's bleakest hours. Bishop Daniel Alexander Payne, who lived on both sides of the Civil War, as he was 55 years old when the war concluded in 1865, but he lived for almost 30 years after the war. When he died in 1893, in addition to the end of slavery he had also witnessed the rise and fall of all the hopes that blacks had invested in Reconstruction and the re-emergence of a Jim Crow era of segregation, punctuated by the oppressive violence of demagogues like Governor "Pitchfork" Ben Tillman and his violent Red Shirts and the emergence of the infamous Ku Klux Klan. And continue This was the man who God called to pick up and continue the vision which was first revealed to Bishop Allen.

Bishop Payne's major contribution, was the infusion of that struggle and the enlargement of that vision with his own strong belief that an educated and literate ministry could be the most effective weapon in the continuation of the liberation theology of the African Methodist church and in its struggle against the oppression which continued, almost unabated, even after the end of slavery. Payne's heartbreaking concern for all the injustices that his people suffered found its best expression in his need to write about and educate others concerning the history of the church and the social, economic, and political issues concerning black people.

In recognition of the tremendous role that Payne played in collecting and cataloguing the history of the AME church, in 1848 Bishop Paul Quinn named him historiographer of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. According to one resource, “delegates to the 1848 General Conference of the African Methodist Episcopal Church in choosing Daniel A. Payne as the denomination’s first Historiographer recognized that their religious body was possessed of enormous ecclesiastical significance and that its development needed to be chronicled. Payne, an alumnus of Gettysburg Theological Seminary, was one of the best educated ministers in the church and an ideal choice for writing the history of African Methodism.²⁷

When one looks at writings of Bishop Payne, it is not difficult to perceive that for him, the Black experience served both as a source of theology and as an essential truth which was central to African Methodism and other black theology.. Although Bishop Payne made outstanding contributions as an educator, preacher, and president of Wilberforce University, first and foremost, he was a theologian, a philosopher, and a prophet.

According to James Cone, the founder of Black Liberation theology,

The task of the theologian, as a member of the people of God, is to clarify what the Church believes and does in relation to its participation in God’s liberating work in the world. In doing this work, the theologian acts in the roles of exegete, prophet, teacher, preacher, and philosopher.²⁸

Cone also believes,

²⁷Daniel A. Payne, *History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church* (AMEC Sunday School Union/Legacy Publishing, History of the African Methodist Episcopal Church by Dennis A. Payne, Edited by C.S. Smith, Introduction by Dennis Dickerson© 1998), Introduction

²⁸ Cone, *God of Oppressed*, 8.

As prophets they must make clear that the gospel of God stands in the judgment upon the resisting order of injustice. This task involves, as Abraham Heschel said, the “exegesis of existence from a divine perspective,” disclosing that God is not indifferent to suffering and not patient with cruelty or falsehood. But God’s power and judgment will create justice and order out of chaos.”²⁹

Cone also states, “as philosophers, theologians are keen observers of the alternative interpretations of the meaning of life. They know that the gospel cannot be taken for granted, cannot be accepted without the continued test of life in struggle.”³⁰

Not only did Bishop Payne clarify that he was a member of the oppressed people of God, but he also strongly confirmed his belief in the church’s liberationist theology as a major vehicle for the message as well as the active work which will bring liberation to people throughout the world who are oppressed. Because of his unique educational background and his strong theological beliefs, Payne was able to bring both of these forces to bear in his effort to fulfill the liberating mission of the church. More specifically, he was able to exegete biblical text in an academic fashion in such a way that he was truly representative of the African Methodist church and its people. In this sense, Bishop Payne was as much a prophet as Habakkuk, who also agonized deeply over the suffering of his people. It was also typical of Bishop Payne, as a strong man of God, to make sure that his flock were steadfast and secure in their identification with God; upon this foundation Payne consistently made the point that under the sovereignty of God, his people were also kin to all others in the family of humankind, and, as such, had an innate right to be free from oppression and dehumanization of any kind.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

According to Vincent L. Wimbush, an internationally recognized scholar of religion, and author of numerous books and articles which approach the great questions of theology from an Afrocentric, liberationist perspective stresses this point about the kinship of humanity in the African Methodist church,

From the nineteenth century into the present, the ideal of the kinship and unity of all humanity under the sovereignty of God has been important to a great number of African Americans, and the official mottos and pronouncements of the independent denominations have reflected that. At the twentieth quadrennial session of the General Conference of the African Methodist Church, in May 1896, the saying of Bishop Payne, “God our Father; Christ our Redeemer; Man our Brother,” become the official motto of the denomination.³¹

³¹Cain Hope Felder, ed. *Stoney The Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: MN Fortress Press, 1991), 92.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Walt Disney famously said, “If you can dream it, you can do it.” This is the attitude that Macedonia AMEC brings to the task of revitalizing church leadership through re-emphasizing its vision and grounding each of these in the spiritually based visionary experience which lies at the heart of the Christian faith. In support of this spiritual quest for an increase in visionary leadership at all levels of the church, to Walt Disney’s famous statement, the members of Macedonia enthusiastically and emphatically add, to his statement about the visionary dream, a belief of our own, “With God, all things are possible.”

The problem that has been identified and which is being considered for solution by this proposed research project is the fact that there is a significant amount of evidence that the Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church leadership team lacks the vision required to meet the array of challenges the church faces in the present and expects to face in the future. This problem has arisen in part as a result of the unmet need for ongoing and dynamic leadership training, such as vision casting and participative leadership for all of those involved at all levels of church leadership. This conclusion has not been reached without a significant amount of both personal and institutional introspection.

At Macedonia AMEC, the process for empowerment of the church for visionary leadership involved a period of formal and informal institutional self-study and analysis, both of which are absolutely necessary in order to effect what is hoped will be a transformation from relative complacency and satisfaction with the status quo to a desire for inspired, participatory, and visionary leadership at Macedonia AMEC. The inspiration for the vision at Macedonia must be firmly grounded in the long faith tradition of African Methodist liberation theology, which will provide the confidence that the vision which is generated for Macedonia is authentic and divinely inspired.

In his article “The Benefits of an Effective Vision,” George Ambler, a widely recognized organizational expert outlines the ways that executive leaders can effectively restructure their organizations through refinement of their organizational missions and revisiting and even re-conceiving their institutional visions. These teambuilding and leadership training activities are designed to train individuals to get the maximal effect of teamwork and to think and act in creative and nontraditional ways. The ultimate goal is to develop the visionary leadership which will successfully develop and implement higher and more productive strategies for their respective organizations.

In the case of Macedonia AMEC, a truly visionary leadership is one which will break new ground by drawing upon the strong spiritual foundation of the AME church as a divine source of empowerment for the leadership of the church in ways that it has never been empowered before. Hopefully, this active and participatory renewal of the desire for visionary leadership will have the effect of positioning Macedonia AMEC and its

members to reap the harvest of the numerous benefits that result from divinely inspired, disciple-centered, and goal oriented visionary leadership.

Through the use of Ambler's rubric and specially selected leadership training materials, the hope and expectation is that this initiative provide Macedonia AME Church with the visionary leadership which, with the help of God, will define a definite direction for the church in the present and the future and will provide a strategic plan which will serve as a reliable and accurate roadmap that will guide Macedonia safely into and far beyond the immediate future. This renewed emphasis on visionary leadership and the special training which will be provided, will empower leaders and potential leaders in the church to realize their maximal potential

Hopefully, the visionary leadership of Macedonia will lead the way in identifying and making maximal use of all the unique features of the church and its community of believers and to learn new ways that these features can be put to more effective use in defining the purpose, identity, and evolving ministries of the church. Finally, visionary leadership will also help to define the kind of organization Macedonia hopes to become in the future and provide the necessary strategic and tactical guidance on how to navigate between where the church is today, in the present moment to where Macedonia hopes to be in the future.

There is no question that visionary leadership produces many benefits. These benefits , which have been very clearly identified by Ambler, should be kept in mind for the discussion which immediately follows as areas in which our study found that

Macedonia was generally not receiving far too many of these benefits and is in need of significant improvement in most of the potential benefits listed below: church,

- Vision provides direction and helps the organization prepare for the future.
- Vision provides guidance for decision-making.
- Vision shapes the organization's strategy.
- Vision guides the types of people you hire and promote.
- Vision defines what you will and what you will not do.
- Vision helps set priorities and guides planning.
- Vision aligns people and activities across the organization.
- Vision provides purpose and a source of inspiration.
- Vision reflects an organization's core values and beliefs.
- Vision empowers people and helps focus their efforts.
- Vision brings change and hope for the future.¹

For years, Macedonia has been repeating the same agendas without a sense of direction or a clear idea of where the church needs to go in the future or how to get there. The leadership team needs to learn, implement, and practice "Visionary Leadership," in a church wide initiative which will educate all church leaders and members in the signal importance of a visionary leadership to the future of the church. Macedonia is not alone among churches which fail to have a clear vision. There are many others. There are other churches which have a partial vision, but who are still unable to overcome the confusion and misunderstanding which inevitably arise when the institutional vision is either unclear or incomplete. Other churches have problems with prioritizing the issues which confront them and spend a lot of time working on issues in the least effective chronological order, totally forgetting the golden rule of thumb, namely that 'First things must always be done first.' Other churches are plagued by issues such as poor communication, pressing financial concerns, and poor involvement of church members, which in their urgency, tend

¹ George Ambler, *10 Characteristics of an Effective Vision*, accessed march 12, 2016, <http://www.georgeambler.com/10-characteristics-of-an-effective-vision/>.

to cause more focus on these problems than on the broader vision of the church. Then there are churches that had a vision, but because they set goals that were impractical or which exceeded the capacity of the leadership of the church, they failed and subsequently allowed these setbacks to discourage and disenchant them with the result that, like the old church spiritual says “Some of the members done turned back.”.

At present, Macedonia AMEC is not enjoying many of the benefits of effective visionary leadership that have been identified above. The church and its leadership is modeled much too closely on the various types of churches described immediately above. Given these findings, it is time for Macedonia to change its direction, because in its present mode of operation without visionary leadership, the church is not realizing its highest potential and cannot possibly be working according to the divine will which informs and guides visionary leadership. As a consequence, the church must undergo a significant transformation. In his book, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*, Robert E. Quinn writes,

When most of us talk about change, we typically mean incremental change. Incremental change is usually the result of a rational analysis and planning process. There is a desired goal with a specific set of steps for reaching it. Incremental change is usually limited in scope and is often reversible. If the change does not work out, we can always do things the old way. Incremental change usually does not disrupt our past patterns—it is an extension of the past. Most important, during incremental change, we feel we are in control.²

Unfortunately, it has been precisely this type of incremental change that the church has been involved for many years. Rather than this superficial change, what is needed is a

² Robert E. Quinn, *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996), 1.

truly transformative change of altitudes, perspectives, and direction. These deep changes must take place in the pastor and leadership and throughout the laity of the church. The deep changes which are required differ from incremental change in that it requires new ways of thinking and behaving. It is change that is major in scope, discontinuous with the past and generally irreversible. The deep change effort distorts existing patterns of action and involves taking risks. Deep change means surrendering control.”³Quinn also believes that, “

Most of us build our identity around our knowledge and competence in employing certain known techniques or abilities. Making a deep change involves abandoning both and “walking naked into the land of uncertainty.” This is usually a terrifying choice, often involving a “dark night of the soul.” It is therefore natural for those who fear change to resort to denial that there is any need for deep change. It is probably fortunate that this type of deep change, since it does involve so much risk and demands the surrender of control, is not something that is demanded on an everyday basis, however, in the fast-paced world of today, we do need to embrace deep change more frequently than we have in the past. Deep change can occur at both the organizational and the personal level. Insights into one level help us understand the other better.⁴

The leadership team at Macedonia must undergo a deep change which will compel the church to step out of its comfort zone, remember its purpose for existence, recognize the poverty of its present state and commit itself to acquiring the divine vision which will transform it from the church it is into the church that God intended it to be. The pastor and laity must do this on a personal and organizational level. They must do an introspective investigation of themselves and raise questions which help them to focus on key issues such as their purpose for being at Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church and

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 4.

their role in the life of Macedonia has God ordained for them. In addition to personal examination by the pastor and laity of Macedonia AMEC, the church must also look at itself from an institutional and organizational point of view and make a realistic assessment of the purpose of the organization and the degree to which the mission of the church is or is not being fulfilled by an effective and inspired vision. By looking at the purpose for existence personally and organizationally, the pastor and laity can come to a meaningful and concrete conclusion what are the problems at the church.

After the initial personal and institutional assessment question, one must raise other questions, about the personal mission of the individual and organizational or institutional mission of the church and its ministries, organizations, and auxiliaries. One must also raise pointed questions about whom the church is called to serve, and in what manner. One must also inquire about the central importance of vision to the church and to church leadership. All these questions of self and institutional assessment demonstrates the appropriateness of having a concern for both the individual self and for the collective church, both of which are precious to God. If the church is going to move forward in its quest for visionary leadership, these concerns must be compelling, attractive, credible, and realistic. In order for a transformation of this depth and magnitude to take place, the leadership team must be committed to broadly shared decision-making, based on their own authentic individual personal, perceptions, and experiences.

From a methodological point of view, one way that one can address the problem of a lack of institutional visionary leadership is through the appropriation of key elements of transformative learning theory. According to Jack Mezirow, who was the first to articulate the Transformative Learning Theory at Columbia University,

Transformation learning theory is based on the notion that we interpret our experiences in our own way, and that how we see the world is a result of our perceptions of our experiences. Transformation learning is a process of examining, questioning, and revising those perceptions. If we were to take the philosophical perspective that there are universal truths and constructs that are independent of our knowledge of them, then the goal of education would be to find those truths. Instead, we develop habitual expectations based on past experiences. We expect things to be as they were before. Or, put another, we uncritically assimilate perspective from our social world, community, and culture. Those perspectives include distortions, stereotypes, and prejudices. They guide our decision-making and our actions until we encounter a situation that is not congruent with our expectation. At that point, we may reject the discrepant perspective or enter into a process that could lead to a transformed perspective.⁵

In order for the church to move forward, a “transformational leadership” approach will be implemented as the pedagogical basis for training church leadership in the process of conscious transformation as it relates to the acquisition and promotion of “vision” and the development of visionary leadership at Macedonia. This initiative will focus on the examination of the work of scholars who have studied, written about and engaged in the processes involved in transformational leadership activities, particularly those which have been used in real life applications. This process will include conducting critical analyses of the viewpoints aligned with the purpose of the study as seen through the lenses of theory and practice as achieved by dialogues based on literature probing both the pros and the cons of transformational leadership. This introspective and intensive process will provide a theoretical framework for the development of visionary leadership. This initiative will also focus on how transformational leadership is particularly relative and appropriate and

⁵ Edward W. Taylor and Patricia Cranton and Associates, *The Handbook of Transformative Learning: Theory, Research, and Practice* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2012), 6.

should be looked at as a vehicle for the implementation of the divine plan for restoring the visionary leadership at Macedonia.

In a similar sense one can see, when one looks at the history of the Israelite civilization during the period of Babylonian captivity, that its ability to endure that oppressive time was largely due to the driving force of a visionary leader. It was God's inspiration that inspired the prophet Habakkuk to write a vision for the people of Israel during their time of enslavement and marginalization. When one looks at the Biblical theme of Habakkuk 2:1-4, God entrusted Habakkuk to be a leader and promote the people, even though they were oppressed "to write a vision and make it plain." Even though Habakkuk called out to God for help in a selfish and aggressive manner, but God did not respond to him in reference to self, alone, but in a holistic and liberating manner which was inclusive of involved everyone who suffered from oppression. The vision that God delegated to Habakkuk did not center on selfish manner, but on a selfless goal to reunite the community to its Creator (God).

Even though Habakkuk at first felt abandoned by God and later was led to question the way that God used the Babylonians to punish Israel for breaking its covenant with God, God, himself, was never unmindful of the covenant that he had made with thenation of Israel, and in consequence of his covenant had kept watch over the security of Israel, even as the Kings of Israel rejected both God and his prophets and did things which were expressed forbidden by their covenant relationship with God, including allowing injustice to the poor and needy to become prevalent in their system and to allow themselves to puff themselves up in their human greatness.

What Habakkuk finally understood was that God had never forgotten Israel; rather it was Israel who had forgotten God, and even Habakkuk, himself who had forgotten that the mind of God is such that forgetting anything, unless it was by his own degree, was impossible. God continued to have a plan for Israel and for his prophet Habakkuk, who was called to help Israel through the time of oppression which was upon them and to help them to see that even when God allows his children to suffer the consequences which come as a result of their own actions, he has in his divine knowledge, a means for their deliverance.

When the nation of Israel was scattered through by its successive conquerors, God has already preordained the preservation of the Jewish nation in all the various places where they would be scattered, even in the Roman district of Tarsus, where one named Saul was born many centuries after the time of Habakkuk and raised in the strict Jewish orthodoxy of Mosaic law. In a sense God's selection of such a resolute and zealous Jew as Saul of Tarsus, is evidence that he still remembered his promise to Habakkuk and, in the time of God, was continuing to work out the circumstances which would use that promise as a springboard for the rise of the Christian faith and its subsequent spread around the world.

Both the visionary experiences of Habakkuk and of Paul reveal God as the most perfect and purposeful of strategic planners, whose inexplicable plans which revealed to men, even in visionary form, only in part because God's plans reach beyond the scope of man's comprehension, often stretching over long centuries and even eons of time, when unbelievers and doubtful men think they have been totally forgotten by God. Gods plans even reach into the seemingly stony and unfertile hearts of men like Saul of Tarsus, a

“hbrew among Hebrew,” who had no conscious intention of becoming a convert to the Christain faith and in an instant filled with visionary power transformed Saul of Tarsus from who he had always thought he was to Paul the Apostle, the man God had always nown him to be, even before his birth. Joining the lives and visionary experiences of Habakkuk the prophet and Paul the apostle for this discussion is merely a reflection of a connection which already existed within the eternal mind of God, who already knew when he advised Habakkuk through his vision on the wall, that the visionary torch would be passed on, centuries later, in the form of an unearthly and blinding light which would appear to an unsuspecting man named Saul of Tarsus, on a dusty road to Damascus.

Vison is certainly not limited to biblical times or to people in the Bible. According to George Barna, in his book, *The Power of Vision*,

Vision has flourished even beyond the lives of biblical characters. In our own century, there are numerous examples of people who, by human standards, show little promise for greatness and little hope of being able to change the lives of people around the world. Nevertheless, these people often demonstrated energy that undeniably transcends their natural capacities and an intensity of commitment far exceeding anything they had previously demonstrated in their lives. The results of their efforts further expose the power of God at work within them.”⁶

It was God’s inspiration that allowed Richard Allen to have a vision and start the Free African Methodist Society, which later became the African Methodist Episcopal Church. It was God’s inspiration that allowed Bishop Alexander Payne to have a vision and write the history of African Methodism, as the first historiographer of the AME church. He also had a vision to found the oldest black private university in America and the first

⁶George Barna, *The Power of Vision* (Ventura, California: Regal Books From Gospel Light, 2003), 19.

college in the country to be owned and operated by African Americans, Wilberforce University in Wilberforce, Ohio. He also had a vision to migrate back to his home state South Carolina and start the South Carolina Annual Conference, which consisted the AME churches in the states of North Carolina, South Carolina, and Georgia.

Vision is important in any group, institution, organization, or especially any church which has the objective to grow spiritually, intellectually, financially, socially, economically, and politically. Given the all-encompassing role that vision plays in the history of scripture, theology, African Methodism, and other contextual sources, it is not at all surprising to see how highly charged they are with visionary light. In Proverbs 29:18, the scripture says, “where there is no vision, the people will perish.” If the people do not have a vision, time and opportunity will pass them by and inevitably they will wind up repeating the same scenario again and again, rather than moving forward and upward. The series on “Visionary Leadership” at Macedonia African Methodist Episcopal Church will be specially designed to help the church and focus on such matters as articulating an institutional purpose, developing a strategy for short and long range planning, and creating and implementing ministries designed to address the needs of individuals, the community , and the church.

The role of visionary leadership in this process of articulation, development, creation, and implementation, is to provide the global agenda, which will keep the church and all of its ministries, organizations, and auxiliaries on a common and maximally complementary course. This commonality could range from the use of a common tool for measuring success towards achieving preset goals to the common philosophical emphasis of all ministries on Black liberation theology. Visionary leadership will also provide the

internal structure which will document and analyze the important milestones that are reached and the program objectives .that are successfully achieved in the time and manner they were planned. Most importantly, visionary leaders, like Habakkuk, will serve as both prophet and priest for the people of God at Macedonia and, as such, must mount the wall and wait for the continuous renewal of the vision, through discipleship, worship, and communion with God.

The divinely inspired visionary leader must have a vision which provides a blueprint for achieving something important which has the potential to make a positive difference. Naturally, visionary leadership presupposes that God is the head of the church and its leadership and the author of the vision as to how to build his church which he will impart in his due time to those who elects. Thus, it is the quality of the faith, the walk with God, and the discipleship of the leader which determines the quality of the leadership that he or she is likely to display and provide in the church.

Burt Nanus, American academic and owner of his own consulting firm, Planning Technology, Incorporated, claims that, “vision is only an idea or an image of a more desirable future for the organization, but the right vision is an idea so energizing that in effect jump-starts the future by calling forth the skills and talents, resources to make it happen.”⁷ The preexistence of an idea in the mind of the visionary leader prior to its revelation, acceptance, and implementation by the church is a human version of the story of creation in which God literally spoke into creation the universe which existed in his eternal mind in pre-conceived form prior to its creation in the dimension of reality. Thus

⁷ Burt Nanus, *Visionary Leadership* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1992), 8.

in Genesis 1:3, “And God said, Let there be light: and there was light,” we understand God foreknew his creation and even though light had never existed in the world before it was specifically created, God in His eternality, was already fully familiar with it.

Of course, in the case of the visionary leader, God is the source and author of the idea or image, which is divinely implanted in the mind of the leader much in the fashion that the word of God came to Habakkuk. At this point, all depends upon the ability of the leader to engage, excite, and infuse his members with the beauty and worthiness of the vision. It is also the responsibility of the leader to teach, and illustrate and explicate the vision to the members in such a practical fashion which specifically shows how they can make use of their skills and talents in achieving the vision and bringing it into concrete reality.

It is of utmost importance that the leader exemplify or “live” the vision. Living the vision makes the visionary leader a living witness who will attract attention, not to himself but to the vision with which he has been entrusted. As more people are attracted to and excited by the vision, the opportunities of success will increase proportionately. In these ways it is incumbent upon the visionary leader to be among the first fruit of what God has sown when he divinely inspired the vision. In this capacity, the visionary leader becomes the appointed leader of the visionary leadership team.

In this new fast-paced, technological, and competitive millennium, any organization which plans to make progress needs a vision and a visionary leader as well, because the truly inspired “vision” plays an important role not only in the start-up phase of an organization but is infused through all elements of the organization, for its entire life cycle. Vision is a signpost pointing the way for all who need to understand what the

organization is and where it intends to go. Sooner or later, the time will come when an organization needs redirection or perhaps a complete transformation, and then the first step should always be a new vision, a wake-up call to everyone involved with the organization that fundamental change is needed and is on the way.”⁸

When it comes to ministry, vision must be observed in a different manner, in fact, it must be looked at in a very clear and precise way.

Vision for ministry is a clear mental image of a preferable future imparted by God to His chosen servants and is based upon an accurate understanding of God, self and circumstances. Vision is a picture held in your mind’s eye of the way things could or should be in the days ahead. Vision connotes a visual reality, a portrait of conditions that do not exist currently. This picture is internalized and personal. It is not somebody else’s view of the future but one that uniquely belongs to you. Eventually, you will have to paint that mental portrait for others if you wish the vision to materialize in your church. Just as you have used your imagination to create this view of the future, you will have to lead others to catch the same vision so that they, too, might share in its implementation and impact. Thus, having a clear picture of the desired outcome in mind is essential. A fuzzy perspective is not vision.⁹

To implement a vision and bring about transformation, the visionary leader must have a steadfast determination not to allow anything or anybody come between visionary leader and his God-given vision. The visionary leader knows that God is in control of the transformation which will fulfill the vision, and that the leader is only the vessel through which God acts upon the church. Transformational leadership occurs when one learns to step over and maneuver around the many obstacles which will seek to destroy the vision even before it can be born. This new theory of leadership is well known among scholars, students, pastors, laity, and many others who are leaders in various circles.

⁸ Ibid., 9.

⁹ Barna, *The Power of Vision*, 25.

According to Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, the divinely inspired leader is one whose inspired and comprehensive vision is contagious and who has the God-given ability to convince others to believe more fully in the spark of the divine within themselves,

Transformational leaders are those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and, in the process, develop their own leadership capacity. Transformational leaders help followers grow and develop into leaders by responding to individual followers' needs by empowering them and by aligning the objectives and goals of the individual followers, the leader, the group, and the larger organization.¹⁰

In order for real participatory progress to take place, one must look at the present state of a problem situation and raise the question, "Are you satisfied with what you see as your future?" This introspective approach should not be limited to upper leadership alone, but should be encouraged throughout all levels of leadership within the church, even extending to those who are in training for future positions of leadership. When individuals and groups within an organization can ask themselves pointed questions about the quality of the church life they are creating, and respond honestly to those questions, then real change is possible. For example, if the church is not satisfied with its direction, it must have the capability of activating the internal mechanism which are fundamental to change and make all the modifications that are necessary to change directions in such a way as to resolve the problem and enhance the overall condition of the organization. If this is not done, then one is merely continuing to go in the same wrong direction where they started. That's why in order for a vision to be promoted there

¹⁰Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, *Transformational Leadership* (New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2006), 3.

must be in place effective leadership. According to Nanus, strong, effective leadership can be characterized as follows,

Leaders take charge, make things happen, dream dreams and then translate them into reality. Leaders attract the voluntary commitment of followers, energize them, and transform organizations into new entities with greater potential for survival, growth and excellence. Effective leadership empowers an organization to maximize its contribution to the well-being of its members and the larger society of which it is a part. If managers are known for their skills in solving problems, then leaders are known for being masters in designing and building institutions; they are the architects of the organizations future.¹¹

Macedonia AME Church must focus its leadership into having a vision which will resonate within the church and within the larger community. An effective vision must be clear and precise in terms of what outcomes are expected, what specific tasks are assigned to each individual, what time lines must be observed, what will be the supervisory or reporting structure, and what the expected cost will be. These are the kinds of precise questions which help to transform visions into reality. Also, an effective vision will address the needs and changes that need to take place. It must also be concurrent with the most recent and up-to-date information available as to what is going on in the context of the problem. In order for all this to take place, the church must realize that the vision is commissioned by God to the visionary leader for Kingdom building and for the purpose of addressing the changes, needs, and circumstances of the church, its people and their community. In his book, *The Power of Vision*, George Barna makes the observation that,

Vision for ministry is a reflection of what God wants to accomplish through you to build His kingdom. Rather than rely upon the abilities of humans to concoct a view of, and to plan for, the future, God conveys His view of that future to a leader. The future of the Church and of the people whom God has placed on this earth are simply too important to Him to allow people to lean on their own innate abilities

¹¹ Ibid., 10.

and talents to develop half-baked schemes for reaching the world. While He allows us ample latitude and creativity to articulate, disseminate and implement the vision, make no mistake about: Visionary leaders receive their vision for ministry for God.¹²

A visionary leader takes on several roles as necessary in the leadership process and must consider all angles from the multiple perspectives of past, present, and future in regards to the various internal and external factors that are germane to the future growth and development of the church. Since this multiplicity of vision which spans the usual perspectives of past, present, and future, the visionary experience is an ideal manner in which to provide church leadership with a bird's eye view of the way the vision is unfolding within the church. Nanus believes,

To be an effective leader in today's rapidly changing world requires a delicate, fourfold balancing act: First, you must be able to relate skillfully to the managers and workers inside your organization who look to you for guidance, encouragement, and motivation. Second, you must be able to relate skillfully to people outside your organization who are in a position to influence success. You must ensure that your organization is well positioned for the market conditions, legal constraints, and other circumstances that affect it. Third, you must be able to shape and influence all aspects of the present operations of your organization. Finally, you must be highly skilled in anticipating the future - that is, assessing and preparing for developments that are likely to have critical implications for your organization in the coming decade. If you were to plot these four dimensions – inside and outside environments, present and future domains you find yourself as a leader, in the very middle, balancing them all.¹³

It is here where the participatory aspect of leadership gains more importance as the various visionary leadership roles which is that the many different be required in the realization of the vision are brought into play. What this means in more practical terms is

¹²Barna, *The Power of Vision*, 26.

¹³ Nanus, *Visionary Leadership*, 12.

that for each of the varied jobs requiring special knowledge, experience, or interest, within the plan that God created at the same time he created the vision, there is a corresponding individual who can play his or her role in the transformation of the church, and a corresponding opportunity for transformation of all those who take part in the vision-building activities of the church.. Some of the roles specifically mentioned by Nanus include direction setter, change agent, spokesman, and coach.

The direction setter is the one who says proclaims, “Let’s move forward,” says the leader. The leader selects and articulates the target in the future external environment toward which the organization should direct its energies. This is the meaning of vision. To be a good direction setter, you must be able to set a course toward a destination that others will recognize as representing real progress for the organization. Progress may mean a clear step ahead in effectiveness or efficiency. If you are successful as a direction setter, you will have established a vision so compelling that everyone in the organization will want to make it happen.¹⁴

One of the elements that is most critically needed in the transformative process is the mysterious element known as the change agent, which is in many cases analogous to the yeast in a loaf of bread which when blended with all the other elements, palpably makes the transformation possible, right in front of our very eyes. This leavening is often established in many successful projects by a spirit of positivity, an aura of strong teamwork, or the motivation and inspiration of those who believe in the transforming process. The change agent Nanus proclaims

Is responsible for catalyzing changes in the internal environment –for example, in personnel, resources, and facilities – to make the vision achievable in the future. To be a good change agent, you must be able to anticipate developments in the outside world, assess their implications for your organization, create the sense of urgency and priority for changes that your vision requires in light of developments, promote experimentation, and empower people to make the necessary changes.

¹⁴ Ibid., 12-13.

You must also be able to build flexibility into your organization and operations and encourage prudent risk taking.”¹⁵

One of the most important elements of bringing to life a positive vision through the participatory teamwork of the church, is through strong communication which keeps all sections of the church team in direct communication with one another so that each not only understands, but also appreciates and supports the accomplishments that other members are making in fulfillment of the shared vision of the church. In addition to this system of positive internal communication, the implementation of a vision also requires strong external communication between the church and its local, state, regional, and national community. Effective communicators will not only inspire others with the outcomes being achieved within the local church, but will also build strong external bonds which might be of incalculable value in the realization of future visions. Nanus has this to say of an effective communicator, or spokesperson,

The leader- as a skilled speaker, a concerned listener, and the very embodiment of the organizations vision – is the chief advocate and negotiator for the organization and its vision with outside constituencies. To be an effective spokesman, you must be the major negotiator with other organizations and the builder of networks of external relationships to provide useful ideas, resources, support, or information for your organization. You and your vision- must become the medium and the message that expresses what is worthwhile, attractive, and exciting about the future of your organization.¹⁶

He also claims the coach.

is a team builder who empowers individuals in the organization and passionately “lives the vision,” thereby serving as mentor and example for those efforts are necessary to make the vision become a reality. To be an effective coach, you must let people know where you stand, what vision means to you, and what you will do

¹⁵ Ibid., 13-14.

¹⁶ Ibid.,

to make it happen. You must also be committed to the success of everyone in your organization, respecting them, building trust, helping them learn and grow, and teaching them how to constantly improve their ability to achieve the vision.¹⁷

A visionary leader must have the right vision that energizes the people to participate in the grassroots process of implementing the plan.

¹⁷ Ibid., 14-15.

CHAPTER SIX

PROJECT ANALYSIS

Introduction

The problem identified for this project is the lack of vision casting within the Macedonia AME Church of Cope, SC. The hypothesis for a solution strategy for this problem is that if an informative, motivational, and educational treatment which consists initially of two leadership training workshops and a four part series of sermons based on the principles of visionary leadership is provided for all members of the active and potential leadership team at Macedonia AMEC, these topics will resonate among church leaders and initiate a centrally organized but grassroots directed response among leaders of the congregation which is drawn from the rich spiritual tradition of the AME Church and the role of the visionary religious experience within the church to appropriate an illuminating vision for itself and begin to evolve from its current complacency towards the dynamic exercise of authentic visionary leadership. The primary goal is to provide leadership training that will provide for the leaders of organizations and auxiliaries at Macedonia AMEC, to become better leaders by acquiring, implementing, and supporting a dynamic vision for the organizations and auxiliaries and the church as a whole. The result of this project will be incorporated into the life the future endeavors of the church, so that the renewal of the process of visionary leadership will become a continuing and cyclic component of the strategic planning activities of the church. The

results of this initiative will also be used as a framework and philosophical foundation for ongoing visionary leadership training at Macedonia AME Church.

Unfortunately, the problem of a sense of complacency, a general lack of direction, a loss of enthusiasm and the other indicators of a lack of vision casting within church leadership is not one which is typical to Macedonia AMEC alone. Those who are involved in the various church networks know that far too often, these types of problems are fairly typical for many local African Methodist Episcopal churches. This lack of vision is also typical in terms of the low and inconsistent levels of adherence, commitment, and dedication to the mission of the episcopacy or to the various programs and initiatives spearheaded by the Presiding Elders who represent the middle management level of the AME church. One of the most unfortunate of the consequences of this lack of vision has been the loss of the centralized prioritizing ability of the church. This has resulted in the unproductive expenditure of more time and effort in fulfilling the demands of the hierarchy than in meeting the critical and legitimate needs of the local church.

The model discussed in this document will help local church leaders to move beyond the current status quo of fulfilling the needs of the bishop and presiding elders and turn, instead, to such proven methodologies as training and practice in vision casting and to developing the innate capacity for visionary which has been dormant in local church leadership for far too long.

Methodology

A qualitative research method was performed to facilitate this project. This approach was used for exploring the efficacy of vision casting as an effective means of promoting the development of visionary leadership within the church. This approach will also be used as the basis for ongoing training and education which will be designed to broaden and deepen the knowledge and understanding within the local church of visionary leadership both as it must be developed for church leadership and as it must be introduced to the church as a whole as a means of creating a more positive environment for the creation and expansion of visionary leaders.

At Macedonia AME Church, the process of research involved a number of specific activities which included the development of a series questions and the creation of testing instruments as well as data collection, analysis, interpretation, and validation. The intent of this study was to bring awareness of the lack vision casting at the Macedonia AME Church through empirical data which confirmed the presence of attitudes which negatively impact the “Esprit de Coeur” which is required for the creation and growth of visionary leadership, and the lack of the resources which are required to train and educate all levels of church leadership in the roles they are required to play both in their own development and as members of the coordinated team which will create the internal network that will play a positive role in creating and sustaining visionary leadership at all levels within the church.

The prescriptive treatment applied for this project consisted of two workshops and a series of four sermons which were based on scriptural perceptions of visionary leadership and on highly regarded, cutting edge methodologies for organizational change. The particular vehicles used for the collection of data was the questionnaire which was administered to all participants in the workshop and sermon presentations, and the data drawn directly from focus group research methodology.

To get the project started, information was provided to the members of Macedonia AMEC, announcing that a workshop on Visionary Leadership would be conducted by Dr. James T. Roberson, former Dean of the Divinity School of Shaw University, the oldest private black institution of higher education in the south. This workshop was to be followed by a sermon on visionary leadership by Dr. Roberson. The project then proceeded with two sermons on biblical foundations of Visionary Leadership from the pastor on vision. Next came the second workshop from Dr. Roberson on Adaptive Leadership followed by a sermon by Dr. Roberson on visionary leadership. To gather data from the workshops, a workshop questionnaire was distributed to all participants at the close of each the workshops. To gather data about the content and effect of the sermons, a sermon questionnaire was distributed to the visionary leadership team. After each sermon was preached, a questionnaire was distributed to the leaders of the church.

Proposed Project Calendar

The project was conducted over time period of six weeks, starting with the appointment of Context Associates and ending with the evaluation of the data.

Date(s)	Activity
June 22, 2014	Context Associates Assigned
July 13, 2014	Discuss problem and treatment with Context Associates
July 20, 2014	Introduced project to the congregation.
September 13, 2014	First workshop presented.
September 14, 2014	First Sermon
September 21, 2014	Second Sermon
September 28, 2014	Third Sermon
October 4, 2014	Second Workshop
October 5, 2014	Fourth Sermon
October 5-26, 2014	Data Analysis

Implementation

The actual implementation of the project took a period of six weeks starting from September 13, 2014 and ending on October 26, 2014.

Workshop I

The first workshop was conducted on September 13, 2014 by Dr. Roberson. The title of the workshop was Visionary Leadership¹. The leadership team of Macedonia was invited and most of the leadership showed up. Actual attendance was documented by the completion of the questionnaires. The entire morning was spent going through specially prepared organizational charts which presented the four components of the seminar, namely the Vision, the Visionary, the Visionary Leadership Team, and the Voice of the Vision. The primary text driving the workshop was the book by Burt Nanus titled *Visionary Leadership*².

The workshop questionnaires were passed out and completed by participants at the conclusion of the workshops. In the information obtained from the workshops participants expressed the feeling that they had been empowered by the workshops to better understand basic concepts of vision and visionary leadership. The team was challenged to take the principles they had learned and apply them in the operation of their respective auxiliaries and programs as essential components of the mobilization of church leadership through the agency of a Shared Vision.

The discussion on the Vision focused on defining what a vision is and how an organization goes about appropriating a shared vision. There was discussion which compared the present conditions of the church as a place which fosters the development of visionary leadership and the distance the church needed to move to reach a more desirable place which fosters the development of visionary leadership in the future.

¹ The slides for the Visionary Leadership Seminar for Macedonia can be seen in Appendix B

² Burt Nanus, *Visionary Leadership*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992).

There was also a discussion of several alternative visions and on using a collaborative approach to focus on the Right Vision for the Macedonia AME church. The church was challenged to use a collaborative approach to appropriate a Shared Vision for the Macedonia AME church.

The second part of the workshop focused on the Visionary and his or her relationship to the Visionary Leadership Team. The officials of the Macedonia AME church were identified as the Visionary Leadership Team for the Macedonia church. This team was challenged to arise to the task of working with the Pastor to extrapolate a Shared Vision for the Macedonia church. There was discussion on the four roles the Visionary must play to work with the Visionary Leadership Team, namely:

- Direction Setter
- Change Agent
- Spokesperson
- Coach

It was determined that the Visionary must play each of these roles in working with the Visionary Leadership Team. The Visionary Leadership Team must in turn, play these same roles with their constituents. One approach to equipping the Visionary Leadership Team is to conduct a Vision Retreat.

Sermon I

On Sunday, September 14, 2014, Dr. James T. Roberson delivered a sermon on vision. The title of the sermon was *A Spiritual Optometrist*. The sermon was based on Acts 9:10-12 and focused on a person who had been disoriented by the loss of his vision and was waiting for someone with a clear vision to come and assist him while he regains his sight. The sermon dealt with inconsistencies in life and how one comes to grips with these inconsistencies, both on the individual and the institutional levels. Using the concept of Transformative Learning as suggested by Jack Mezirow, it was pointed out that persons who have lost their vision generally experience a disorienting dilemma. Once past their disorienting dilemma, they are able to relearn things and be more committed to their belief system. The sermon suggests that Paul experienced a disorienting dilemma on the Damascus Road and lost his vision. He needed someone to assist him until he was able to regain his sight. This was the job God assigned to Ananias and which he explicated to Ananias in the context of a visionary experience. This is the job of the visionary – to help members of the team to gain their sight. The sermon questionnaire was distributed and completed at the conclusion of the sermon. Data from the questionnaires suggests that many of the members of the church were able to grasp the concept of eliminating the various debilitating inconsistencies in their lives and opening themselves up to a new vision. This activity marked the formal beginning of the effort by Macedonia AMEC to extrapolate a shared vision for the church.

Second Sermon

Rev. Dennis Broughton, Jr delivered the second sermon on September 21, 2014. The title of the sermon was “It’s Time to Sound the Trumpet Macedonia.” The Scriptural basis for the sermon was Numbers 10:1-7 in which Moses is instructed to “Make thee two trumpets of silver; of a whole piece shalt thou make them: that thou mayest use them for the calling of the assembly, and for the journeying of the camps.” The focus of the sermon was to draw the attention of the congregation to the signal importance that God places on the capability of his people to come together when a call is made, and to work together in plan a vision for the church as a whole or facing whatever other problem the church might be confronting. The sermon pointed out the similarity between the people being called together by the silver trumpets and the resultant coming together of the heads of the clans of Israel and the coming together of the heads of organizations and auxiliaries of Macedonia AMEC. The sermon also suggests that by ordering the creation of the silver trumpets, Moses and the children of Israel were in need a new and more effective way or procedure of calling people to assemble in order to work together to meet the challenges facing the church.

In this biblical text, God is using Moses as an agent to instruct the Israelites and specifically to keep them in a position of united strength, during their potentially dangerous movement throughout the desert. Here we see God instructing the Israelites to construct a torch and two silver trumpets. According to the Bible, the trumpets were long, straight, slender, metal tubes with flared ends. The trumpets were blown for order and discipline. This passage concerning the silver trumpets and the torch indicate the need for the sound of the trumpets which calls together the people of God and the flare or

torch which enables them to see their way are both essential in order to have victory over the enemy.

The church needs both the light of the visionary experience which will provide the instructions and guidance it requires for success. Likewise, the church needs the sound of the trumpet, the ability to call together all the leadership of the church in order that the vision which has come through the enlightenment of God may be shared with as many members and on as many levels of leadership throughout the church as possible. In this way, the divine light of the vision and the resounding sound of the trumpets calling the church to united and strategic action both work together in supporting and furthering the visionary process.

. Third Sermon

Rev. Dennis Broughton delivered the third sermon on September 28, 2014. The title of the sermon was “Macedonia Its Time To Write The Vision and Make it Plain.” The focus of the sermon was for one to discover having a vision, which is a communion with God, is the sole purpose for living. The reason God has allowed us to live in the world is to achieve a vision or a spiritual reuniting with him which will direct the pathways of our lives and endow our lives with meaning and significance.. In order to achieve the vision God has prepared for each of us, it is necessary to overlook and ignore problems, obstacles, and failures. Once these destructive and obstructionist forces are overcome, it is possible for the visionary leader to achieve whatever vision God has laid upon his heart. The first step in achieving a vision, is by understanding fully exactly what a vision is.

- Vision is an inexplicable but authentic discovery of God's plan as it relates to your life.

- Vision is also the gift of foresight united with insight.

- Vision is also having an awareness of a task with the end in mind.

In the highlighted text, we see where Habakkuk the prophet received an answer from God based on his determination. Habakkuk was determined to hear from God because he had a problem with God. The problem was Habakkuk felt that God has not judged Judah's wickedness and when he finds out that God is going to judge this wickedness, he is still unhappy over the means that God plans to use in his judgement of Israel. Therefore, he constantly complained to God. Some scholars would call this complaint, lamenting. Habakkuk's complaint about God's righteousness shapes the style of his book which is a record of his dialogue with God in which each listens as the other speaks. The judgement for which he pleads is twofold: vengeance on the wicked and vindication of the righteous.

Also, in the backdrop of this text, we learn how Habakkuk, theologian as well as prophet was baffled by the seemingly interminable delay in judgement, while whatever vitality remained in Judah. The people were suffering from violence, oppression, and lawlessness.

A lot of us find ourselves like the prophet, failing to see the entire vision that God presents to us because of or constantly complaining to God. Our complaints may not be on the same broad national scale as those of the prophet whose responsibility was to the entire nation of Israel, but even in our more limited concerns, such as our personal or family financial, health, and social issues, many of us, like Habakkuk, spend our time in

complaint to God and asking for help through his grace and mercy rather than seeking and apprehending the vision or blueprint that God has always provided for our personal lives and for the church.. What we do not seen to realize it that the grace and mercy that we spend our time asking for were already available through faith, prayers and commitment. God attempts, through the visionary experience, to show each of us how we have the capability of becoming the solution to our various problems and to the problems which face the church. As Christians and as committed members of God's church, we must remain alert for and attentive to the visionary experience. The sermon questionnaire was distributed to the leadership team.

Second Workshop

The second workshop was conducted on October 4, 2014 by Dr. Roberson. The title of the workshop was Adaptive Leadership. The leadership team of Macedonia was invited and attended in significant numbers which are documented by the completed questionnaires. The Workshop focused on adaptive leadership and how it differs from technical leadership. As Dr. Robertson explained, technical leadership is akin to what most people do on their daily jobs. People are given an assignment or task to complete along with the necessary tools and resources needed to accomplish the task. The assignment is then carried out in a perfunctory manner. Persons are free to make decisions, correct mistakes, and quell any problems that arise as long as one operates within the technical parameters of the job function.

The entire morning was spent going through the concepts of Adaptive Leadership. The following topics were discussed:

- The essence of leadership
- Broken system illusions
- Technical vs Adaptive challenges
- Disequilibrium
- The Adaptive Process
- Engagement above and below the neck
- Connection to Purpose
- Community of Inquiry

Each of these items were spelled out and discussed in an open forum session.

In the Essence of Leadership discussion, the real work of leaders was addressed. Other topics discussed included, the concept of managing change, and the fact that people often resist change because they fear that change will cause them to lose something. If people can be helped to see that they are more likely to gain than to lose, they are much more open to change. A good bit of time was spent discussing the DNA of the environment and the concept of evolutionary process in DNA. During this extended discussion it was emphasized that organizations must adjust to new circumstances in the environment and must be willing to jettison those traits or practices that no longer contribute to their existence. In the adaptive leadership concept, the leader must come up with new strategic approaches to resolving emerging problems.

There was also a discussion of the Productive Zone of Disequilibrium. The concept puts forth the idea that enough pressure must be applied to the organization to get it to move from stagnation to dynamic and strategic action. Too much pressure can destroy the organization and what it is trying to do. The idea is to move the organization

to its Productive Zone of Disequilibrium, by causing enough discomfort to prompt organizational change, but not enough pressure to damage or harm the organization. The concept is much like the working of a pressure cooker.

Adaptive Leadership Process requires that the leader to observe- which means being actively involved in the process of change by being able to stand off and watch the process. The concept was explained as the difference between actually dancing on the dance floor and standing on the balcony and from that advantageous position and perspective being able to watch --simultaneously --many different parts of the dance floor. The second part is Interpret- the leader must construct a correct meaning of what is happening. One must consider the parameters of Transformative Learning in meaning making. The last part of the process is to Act- by determining what action is required, based on the visionary hypothesis, by making the necessary adjustments to achieve the action.

The workshop discussed the concept of working above and below the neck. This idea focused more on the cognitive process of mentally examining the situation through using those human resources which are located above the neck. The work below the neck was more visceral or action oriented and was the action part of the process. Lastly, the workshop focused on connecting the purpose of the organization with the task at hand. Adaptive Leadership focuses on a Community of Inquiry in addressing problems facing the organization

During the workshop, participants were divided into small groups and asked to consider the concepts of Adaptive Leadership being applied to their particular

organization within the church. This session led to open discussion on how the concepts presented could improve the output of their respective organizations.

The workshop questionnaire was distributed to leadership team after the second workshop.

Fourth Sermon

On the following Sunday, October 5, 2014, Dr. Roberson delivered a sermon on organizational change. The title of the sermon was Peter Pan Christians. The sermon was based on Ephesians 4:11-14.

And He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, ¹² for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, ¹³ till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; ¹⁴ that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

The sermon spoke to the idea that God put the church in place and equipped it in such a diverse manner that it was empowered to grow. The problem occurs when we have Christians who do not grow. These persons are referred to as Peter Pan Christians and they can be the problem in the church who, because they refuse to grow, often prevent the church from growing.

The sermon questionnaire was distributed and completed at the conclusion of the sermon. Data from the questionnaires suggests that many of the members of the church were able to grasp the concept of getting rid of the inconsistencies in their lives and opening themselves up to a new vision.

Data Analysis

The data collected for this project consists of two parts: the workshop questionnaire and the sermon questionnaire. In each case, the questionnaires were distributed following the project event. The analysis of this data follows:

Workshop Questionnaire

For the workshops, the questionnaires were different for each workshop. In addition, the questions were presented during the workshops and responses usually resulted in open discussions. The questions for each workshop followed the materials presented during the workshops.

Workshop-I Data Analysis

Workshop-I was entitled “Visionary Leadership Seminar: Macedonia AME Church.” All sixteen members of the Macedonia AME Leadership Team were present for the workshop. The focus of the workshop was on Visionary Leadership as presented by Burt Nanus in his book *Visionary Leadership*. The workshop took on the form of the *Visionary Workshop Workbook* and was divided into:

- The Vision,
- The Visionary,
- The Visionary Leadership Team, and
- The Voice of the Vision.

After each section of the workshop was completed, a general question was raised as to the level of understanding of the concept. There was no data recorded during the open discussions and the general consensus of the group was that each of the component parts of the workshop were thoroughly understood. There was great discussion on the Voice of the Vision as we approached that topic. The participants were able to see desired change in their community as the voice of the vision for Macedonia.

In summary each of the members of the leadership team demonstrated an understanding of Visionary Leadership and particularly their role in functioning as a visionary leader of the Macedonia AME church. The leadership team members, the pastor, and the facilitator all concluded that the workshop had a positive effect on the team's understanding of Visionary Leadership.

Workshop-II Data Analysis

The second workshop was conducted by Dr. Roberson. The title of the workshop was **Adaptive Leadership**. The leadership team of Macedonia was invited and attended in significant numbers as documented by the completion of the questionnaire forms. The focus of the Workshop was adaptive leadership and how it differs from technical leadership.

The entire morning was spent going through the concepts of Adaptive Leadership. The following topics were discussed:

- The essence of leadership
- Broken system illusions
- Technical vs Adaptive challenges

- Disequilibrium
- The Adaptive Process
- Engagement above and below the neck
- Connection to Purpose
- Community of Inquiry

Each of these items were spelled out and discussed in an open forum session. After each section of the workshop was completed, a general question was raised as to the level of understanding of the concept. There was no data recorded during the open discussions and the general consensus of the group was that each of the component parts of the workshop were thoroughly understood. There was great discussion on Disequilibrium and also on The Adaptive Process. The participants were able to understand their role in effecting the Productive Zone of Disequilibrium in their organizations. This topic led to a robust discussion.

In summary each of the members of the leadership team demonstrated an understanding of Adaptive Leadership and particularly their role in functioning in an Adaptive leadership capacity. The leadership team members, the pastor, and the facilitator all concluded that the workshop had a positive effect on the team's understanding of Adaptive Leadership.

Sermon Questionnaire

For the sermons, the same questionnaire was used for each sermon. The sermon questionnaire was distributed after each sermon. The purpose of the questionnaire was to reveal the leadership team's understanding of visionary leadership. The questions in the questionnaire were as follows:

1. Does the sermon help your understanding of Visionary Church Leadership?
2. Did the sermon cause you to reflect on your role as a visionary leader?
3. Did the sermon cause you to modify your leadership style to project visionary leadership?
4. Did the sermon help in seeing yourself as a visionary leader?
5. As a result of your adjustment from the sermon, do you think that your constituents would see your leadership role as being different?

For each question, the possible response was yes/no. Each of the questions in the questionnaire is analyzed relative to each sermon below.

Question 1

The first questions asked "Does the sermon help your understanding of Visionary Church Leadership?"

The responses to this question from the first sermon were; Yes - 16; No – 0; or 100%.

The responses to this question from sermon two were; Yes -12; No - 4; or 75% Yes.

The responses to this question from the third sermon were;

Yes -16; No – 0; or 100% Yes.

The responses to this question from the fourth sermon were;

Yes – 16; No – 0; or 100% Yes.

In summary for question one, the responses were 94% Yes.

Question 2

The second question asked “Did the sermon cause you to reflect on your role as a visionary leader?”

The response to this question from the first sermon were; Yes – 12; No – 4; or 75% Yes.

The response to this question from sermon two were; Yes – 16; No – 0; or 100%.

The response from the third sermon were; Yes – 10; No – 6; or 60% Yes.

The response to this question from the fourth sermon were; Yes – 15; No – 1; or 94% Yes.

In summary for question two, the responses were _89_% Yes.

Question 3

The third question asked “Did the sermon cause you to modify your leadership style to project visionary leadership?”

The response to this question from the first sermon were; Yes – 8; No – 8; or 50% Yes.

The response to this question from sermon two were; Yes – 16; No – 0; or 100% Yes.

The response from the third sermon were; Yes – 14; No – 2; or 87% Yes.

The response to this question from the fourth sermon were; Yes – 16; No – 0; or 100% Yes.

In summary for question three, the responses were 90% Yes.

Question 4

The fourth question asked “Did the sermon help in seeing yourself as a visionary leader?”

The response to this question from the first sermon were; Yes – 16; No – 0; or 100% Yes.

The response to this question from sermon two were; Yes – 12; No – 4; or 75% Yes.

The response from the third sermon were; Yes – 16; No – 0; or 100% Yes.

The response to this question from the fourth sermon were; Yes – 16; No – 0; or 100% Yes.

In summary for question four, the responses were 96% Yes.

Question 5

The fifth question asked “As a result of your adjustment from the sermon, do you think that your constituents would see your leadership role as being different?”

The response to this question from the first sermon were; Yes – 5; No – 11; or 35% Yes.

The response to this question from sermon two were; Yes – 7; No – 9; or 44% Yes.

The response from the third sermon were; Yes – 16; No – 0; or 100% Yes.

The response to this question from the fourth sermon was; Yes – 16; No – 0; or 100% Yes.

In summary for question five, the responses were 80% Yes.

Summary of Learnings

As a result of the completion of this study and the strong participation by the leadership and members of Macedonia AMEC in the processes described above, we have arrived at the following conclusions which we plan to embed in all areas of visionary leadership training, strategic planning and future growth at Macedonia AMEC:

1. It is not merely a good idea for the church to have a divinely inspired vision which is, at once, a model and a guideline for the future, in the Christian church, such a vision is mandatory and should be a natural outcome of the application of faith to all the internal and external affairs of the church.
2. The effort to identify and attain a divinely inspired mission for the church must be grounded in a dimension of faith, discipleship, and prayer which authenticate the Christ-centered visions of our leaders and guide the implementation of the vision in accordance with the mission of the church.
3. Once the church has authenticated the visionary revelations granted to its leaders, it must not hesitate to enlist the practical and professional guidance and assistance required to ensure that the divinely inspired vision of the church is implemented at the highest possible level of quality.
4. Training in visionary leadership should be a requirement for all current and potential church leaders. In this manner, the church can foster the sowing of new seeds for leadership while at the same time providing future leaders with a

spiritual and intellectual understanding of the visionary process and how it plays out in the everyday life of the church.

5. Opportunities for leadership must be expanded so that younger people in the church can have additional opportunities to prepare for their future roles as church leaders. In some cases, mandatory caps should be placed on the length of time that the most senior leaders can serve before stepping into advisory/emeritus positions where they will serve as trusted and experienced advisors to developing leaders in the actual context of the life of the church.
6. Opportunities for visionary leadership training should be expanded to include at least on an annual or semiannual basis, a retreat which will allow for meaningful combination of intensive and “tarrying” prayer for the vision of the church and the essential work of developing a strategic plan for the church.
7. A strategic plan for church development and growth, based on visionary leadership and on planning for the future should be developed, adopted, updated every two or three years, and made available to all members as part of the communications network of the church.
8. Ongoing training, such as that provided in the workshops, should be made available at least once annually to all church members. If this is not possible, one of the professionals who guides the workshop, which is restricted to church leaders, could be engaged to develop training curricula in vision and discipleship, which could be included in regular Sunday School and other training opportunities which are already open to the entire membership.

9. To continue to foster the church vision both internally and externally, the church should consider the development of an official website or web page which could “publish abroad” news about the visionary leadership and the development of the church.
10. To continue to foster the church vision both internally and externally, the church should consider the development of a one page newsletter which could be sent to all church members and friends, once per quarter, informing them about new initiatives in visionary leadership, discipleship, and strategic planning at Macedonia AME Church.

Conclusion

The objective of the study was to address the problem of a lack of visionary leadership at the Macedonia AME church of Cope, SC. To address this problem, a treatment of two workshops and four sermons was prepared and presented to the leadership team of Macedonia. Questionnaires we used to collect data to determine if this treatment had any effect on the problem.

While the data collected was sparse the analysis of these data revealed that the leadership team did appropriate an understanding of visionary leadership and they were able to apply it to their positions of leadership at the Macedonia AME church.

Academic Lessons Learned

During the course of this study, the pastor, the Church leadership team, and other participants in the various project implementation activities held at Macedonia AME Church learned many new things about the ongoing transformative process that should be a part of the growth and development of Macedonia and every healthy and progressive church.

One of the most important lessons learned was that in embracing the visionary leadership development process, the church must equally value its past, and its present, while not overvaluing either in favor of the other as it seeks to achieve its divinely inspired future. The church must never forget its Christian, Protestant, and AME historical roots and liturgical traditions, for within these resides the foundation of the church, upon which all else will be built. In Matthew 16:18 Jesus said of the man who would become the Apostle Peter, “Upon this rock I will build my church.” In the same way, the past and the historical traditions of the church are the foundations upon which the future of the church with its cutting edge knowledge and technology must be built.

Even as the church embraces the opportunities and challenges of the future, the challenges and the hard won accomplishments of the past must not be forgotten. These include the powerful legacy of liberation theology which was practiced by AME church fathers such as Bishop Richard Allen, and Daniel Payne long before liberation theology was a recognized theological term. Through the strategic approach of Church leaders like these, the church was guided through many troubled times of oppression and dehumanization: Bishop Allen lived during the slavery era, and Bishop Payne lived to see

the grand hopes and promises of the Reconstruction period crumble into dust by the emergence of Jim Crow throughout the South.

Another lesson learned in the course of this project is the signal importance of the fact that all change must be built upon a divinely inspired visionary leadership which is able motivate its membership by effectively communicating its vision for the future of the church. Guided by divine inspiration, these visionary leaders not only provided a means of guiding the church through troubled times of oppression through spiritual transcendence, but also a means by which the church also dared hope for economic, political, and social liberation as well.

A final lesson learned is that the church must focus on the development of strong, inspired leadership which is focused on the mission and the direction that the church must take, and on strong discipleship of members who are willing to embrace cutting edge Christian education which will empower the church to perform the strategic planning and implementation which will empower them to accomplish the work of the Church in an increasingly challenging world.

Personal Lessons Learned

First, I have learned to place the highest of all values on the Christian visionary experience because as a result of my studies, I have reaffirmed my belief that this experience continues to be a means whereby the wish of the Divine is made known to man. As a result, throughout my ministry, I will always pay the highest attention to the time that I spend in openness and patience and meditation, waiting, as Habakkuk did, on the will of the God for my life and for my church, to be manifested through the visionary experience.

Second, I have learned that leadership, even with it is directed by Divine vision, is only as powerful and as effective as God intends it to be if we are inclusive of others within the church. This means that strong communication is key to the transmission of the vision, first to church lay leaders, and subsequently to the entire church, and even to the local and more distant communities beyond the church. Strong communication does not consist merely of being able to speak eloquently or merely of being articulate in the scriptures; strong communication must also mean learning to listen, willingly, to the ideas and thoughts of others and to attempt to find ways that these ideas and thoughts fit into the master plan of the vision which God has given to you.

Third, I have learned that as a pastor it is important to keep abreast of both our history and our future. From an historical point of view, the AME and other churches are among the most reliable of the keepers of history of the African-American community. We must continue to protect, cherish, and teach that proud history to others so that they might be encouraged by the outstanding thoughts and words and deeds of their ancestors. In this proposal, I have been very pleased to make extensive use of oral history to document much of the history of Macedonia AME Church; I have also used much of the historical record of the AME Church to document the broader history of the church and to identify early forms of visionary leadership as practiced by great AME ministers such as Bishops Richard Allen and Daniel Payne.

In terms of the future, I have learned that it is incumbent upon the pastor to bring to the Christian management of the church with which he has been entrusted, the most modern and cutting edge styles of management possible so that the work of the church in all its ministries will be greatly enhanced and facilitated. For example, in this proposal, I

have made use of advanced logic based problem/solution methodology in church strategic planning and implementation. In addition, I have employed a number of transformative strategies in Christian education and church and ministry development.

Finally, in working through this proposal, I have come face to face with many of the questions which are germane to Liberation theology and have had to give considerable amount of thought as to how these affect the mission of the church. I have literally been forced to look at how the Article of Faith of the AME Church which pertains to Original Sin and relates to the Article of faith of the AME Church which pertains to Good Works.

Major Challenges

Perhaps the greatest challenges uncovered during this project included the unwillingness of many older church members to disentangle themselves from the comfort and familiarity of the status quo. Many members of the church simply did not see any pressing need to change the status of the way things had functioned in Macedonia for a number of years. Thus the first challenge was to address the sense of complacency into which a majority of the church membership had fallen.

The need to address the problem of church complacency revealed several other challenges. First was the need to make sure that the pastor and the leadership of the church were as finely attuned as possible to the world of God in the visionary experience. The case of Habakkuk illustrates the fact that at times the leadership might be impatient or even unwilling to hear what God has to say, but, like Habakkuk, if the leaders “Wait” for the vision to be complete, they, too, will understand the will of God. The second challenge was to the pastor and church leaders to intensify the quality and the quantity of

their spiritual devotion, so that they would be blessed with the visionary insight which is needed for the future direction of the church.

After achieving this level of communication with the divine as inspiration for the visionary leadership of the church, it is then incumbent upon the pastor and other church leaders to communicate in an effective manner their shared vision with the members of the church so as to motivate the membership to “buy into” the visionary leadership. The pastor and church leadership must also lay the groundwork for the increased understanding of the church in general of the qualitative methodology to be employed in the implementation of the strategic vision

They must do this by designing and presenting effective training and education which will empower the membership to bring new skills to the task of working together to achieve the visionary mission of the church. Only by achieving this kind of clear communication and effective training and education, can the full participation of the membership be expected.

What is next?

In terms of Macedonia AME Church, the process of transformation of the church from Christian complacency to Visionary leadership will continue, partially because its implementation was so inclusive of so many of the church members who became willing participants in the process. The involvement and interest of the membership of Macedonia will keep the drive for visionary leadership alive regardless of whatever other changes may occur within the church.

Some of the more concrete goals that likely will be achieved, include

- 1) More opportunities for Christian education in such areas as strategic planning and implementation,
- 2) More opportunities for younger members of the church to become more involved in position of leadership and leadership training,
- 3) More emphasis by the pastor on effectively sharing the inspired vision with the membership, and
- 4) Identification of additional external resources which will assist in developing more effective leadership and planning in the church.

Replication

Replication of this proposal, which is designed to empower local churches to achieve greater visionary leadership which functions at all levels of the church, should begin on the district level. Macedonia AME Church leaders should identify other AME churches within the district which have similar aspirations in terms of visionary leadership. A good approach would be for the pastor to personally invite pastors from the district to a meeting so that he can share with them the key elements of the proposal for visionary leadership which has been implemented at Macedonia AME Church. He can also share with them as many of the known outcomes as possible.

If these ministers demonstrate an interest in initiating a similar project within their churches, Macedonia should provide the instructional leadership as well as the partnership for this endeavor. By working closely with each of the individual ministers and churches within the District, the project originator will be able to broaden the applications of the project beyond the circumstances which are particular to Macedonia. In this manner, as the methodology is shared, it is also refined.

The originating pastor would provide at least one of the sermons in the training which would be provided at each participating churches and would conduct at least one of the training workshops. The originating pastor should assist and augment the efforts of the regular pastor who is undertaking this project for the first time, but should not overpower the regular church pastor.

The originating pastor will designate a committee of competent individuals at Macedonia AME Church who will continuously refine, update, and improve all the training and educational materials used in this project. As these materials are completed and updated, based upon the findings from the work done at the new participating churches, it will be incorporated into the Visionary Leadership Curriculum which will be copy written by the AME Church, under whose authority these projects will be conducted.

By working in this manner within the district, the project originator should be able to compile a comprehensive set of training and educational materials which could be used successfully in churches beyond the District level. In a more general, sense, this study should also be applicable, not only to other AME churches, but to churches in general where an absence of visionary leadership has been identified as a major problem. Toward that end, the author will be looking to revise and rework the current document in such a manner as to make it more applicable to churches in general.

As outlined above, the first step towards replication might be achieved through using examples throughout the manuscript which are drawn from many different churches of different sized and customs within and external to the AME jurisdiction. In

this manner, it is hoped that a work can be produced which will allow the methodology designed in this document to be replicated, first in AME churches and at a later time, in Protestant churches in general to serve as a guideline for the achievement of visionary leadership. Replication could begin at the local level by having the pastor and other trained members of the Macedonia leadership team work with other churches which might be interested in visionary leadership and sharing with them the methodology which was successfully employed at Macedonia AME Church, including the workshops, the surveys, the lectures, sermons, and presentations, and other teaching materials which might be developed in the future, including Media based educational material.

Growth

Since undertaking this project, the author of this document has experienced a tremendous amount of spiritual, social, and intellectual growth. In a spiritual sense, the close reading of the scriptures which was necessary in this study of the Prophet Habakkuk and the Apostle Paul has brought me to a stronger and deeper understanding of the Christian visionary experience as an inspired means of communication between man and God and about how God uses the visionary experience to teach, to guide, and to bring about change. These close readings and exegesis of the scripture and the reflection they demanded have led me to a deeper understanding of and a greater appreciation for the scriptures and their authenticity.

Intellectually, I have probed not only into the scriptural record, but also in the historical records which I have used to augment the record of the scriptures. In addition, I have experienced significant intellectual growth in the areas of African American history, the history of the AME Church, Ancient Bible history, the history of Macedonia AME

Church, and the historical accounts of the effect of the Babylonian invasion on the life of the prophet Habakkuk, the effect of Roman Hellenism on the Apostle Paul, the effect of American slavery on Bishop Richard Allen, and the effect on post-Reconstruction and Jim Crow on Bishop Daniel Payne.

In addition, I have become intellectually familiar with the scholarly work of a host of Christian theologians ranging from Gustavo Gutierrez, the Father of Liberation theology, to, Owen C. Thomas and Ellen K. Wondre and their theory of contextualization, to James Cone and his notions about the social context of the Christian visionary experience, to other thinkers like Jack Mezirow, the first scholar to articulate the Transformative Learning Theory, George Barna, and his notion on the power of vision, and Bernard M. Bass and Ronald E. Riggio, who in *“Transformational Leadership,”* provide an objective definition for the divinely inspired leader. I truly feel that the experience of this project has forever broadened my intellectual horizons and helped to open the doorway to the endless possibilities in the world of scholarship.

I also feel that in undertaking this task, I have become a better pastor for Macedonia AME Church and for the AME Church in general. It has not been possible for me to look into the question of the visionary experience without a close examination of my own spiritual life and ministry. I have also had to look critically at my interaction with my membership and their interaction with me, and to seek ways to maximize the positive effects of our relationships. The gift of self-examination which was given to me during this project is a gift that I expect to use throughout my ministerial career.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ali, Carroll A. Eatkins. *Survival & Liberation: Pastoral Theology in African American Context*. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1999.
- Allen, Richard. *The Life Experience And Gospel labors Of The Rt. Rev. Richard Allen*. Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union/ Legacy Publishing, 1990.
- Ambler, George. “*Characteristics of an Effective Vision*.” <http://www.georgeambler.com> (Accessed February1, 2016).
- AME Church. n.d. <http://ame-church.com/our-church/our-structure/> (accessed November 2015).
- Anderson, Bernhard W. *Understanding the Old Testament*. Englewoodcliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall Inc, 1957.
- Anderson, Vinton. *A Model of a Servant Bishop: The Ministry of Vinton Randolph Anderson*. Nashville: AMEC Publishing House, 2003.
- Andrew, Dale. *Practical Theology for Black Churches*. Westminster: John Knox Press, 2002.
- Barber, Cyril J. Habakkuk and Zapaniah. Everyman’s Bible Commentary. Chicago: Moody Press, 1985.
- Barna, George. *The Power of Vision*. Ventura: Regal From Gospel Light, 2003.
- Bass, B.M. *Bass and Strodgill's handbook of Leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications*. New York: Free Press, 1990a.
- _____. *From transactional to transformational leadership: Learning to share the vision. Organizational Dynamics*. New York: Free Press, 1990b.
- _____. *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press, 1985.
- Bass, Bernard M; Riggio, Ronald E. *Transformational Leadership*. New York: Psychology Press, 2006.
- Batterson, Mark. *Draw the Circle*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.

- Bearden, Harold I. *A.M.E. Church Polity*. Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 1984.
- Bennis, Warren. *On Becoming a Leader*. Reading: Addison-Wesley, 1989.
- Bennis, Warren; Nanus, Burt. *Leaders*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.
- Bondi, Richard. *Leading God's People*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989.
- Brooks, A. *Cultures of Transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- Brueggeman, Walter. *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Brueggemann, Walter. *Hope within History*. Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1987.
- Burns, J.M. *Transforming Leadership*. New York: Grove Press, 2003.
- Burrow, Rufus, Jr. *James H. Cone and Black Liberation Theology*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1994.
- Butler, Lee H. *Liberating Our Dignity*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2006.
- Butler, Trent C; Smith, Marsha A; Jackson, Forrest W; Logan, Phil; Church, Chris; editors. *The Holoman Bible Dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Holoman Bible Publishers, 1991.
- Callahan, Kennon L. *Effective Church Leadership*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990.
- Collins, Patricia Hill. *Black Feminist Thought*. New York, New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Cone, James. *God of the Oppressed*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003.
- Cone, James H. *Black Theology & Black Power*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003.
- _____. *For My People: Black Theology and the Black Church*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1984.
- _____. *The Cross And The Lynching Tree*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2011.
- Conger, J.A. , & Benjamin, B. *Building Leaders: How successful companies develop the next generation*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999.
- Cope South Carolina, accessed November 15, 2015. www.city-data.com/city/Cope-South-Carolina.html.
- Cope South Carolina Cope South Carolina, accessed November 15, 2015. <http://www.sciway.net/city/cope.html>.

- Coptic Orthodox Diocese of the Southern United States, *"Saul of Tarsus and the Martyrdom of St. Stephen."* Sandia, TX: Saint Mary and Saint Moses Abbey Press. 2016.
- Cranton, P. *Understanding and Promoting Transformative Learning: A guide for Educators of Adults.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2006.
- Cresswell, John W. *Research Design.* NY: Baker, 2009.
- _____. *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches.* Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2014.
- Depree, Max. *Leadership Is an Art.* New York: Doubleday, 1989.
- de Saint-Exupery, Antoine: The Citadel, Vyšehrad spol. s ro, Praha 2002, trans. Vera Dvorakova, complete edition
- Dickerson, Dennis C. *A Liberated Past: Explorations of AME Church History.* Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2003.
- _____. *A Liberated Past: Explorations AME Church History.* Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 2003.
- Donaldson, J. *Fostering Transformative Learning in Leadership Development.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.
- Dr. Sir Walter L. Mack, Jr. *How To Make A Wrong Relationship Right.* Tulsa, OK: Word & Spirit Books, 1996.
- E. Taylor; P. Cranton. *The Handbook of Transformative Learning Theory, Research, and Practice.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2012.
- Ewing, David. *The Human Side of Planning.* New York : McMillan, 1969.
- Exell, Joseph S., Smith, R. Payne, Paul, C. Kegan. *The Pulpit Commentary.* Charleston, South Carolina; BiblioBazaar, 2010.
- Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth.* New York, New York: Grove Press, 1963.
- Freire, Paulo. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* New York, NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2005.
- Gilroy, Paul. *The Black Atlantic.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993. Biblio
- Grant, Jacquelyn. *White Women's Christ and Black Women's Jesus.* Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989.
- Greenleaf, Robert K. *Servant Leadership.* Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1977.

- Grierson, Denham. *Transforming a People of God*. Melbourne: Joint Board of Christian Education, 1984.
- Gutierrez, Gustavo. *A Theology of Liberation*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2003.
- Hagiya, Grant. *Spiritual Kaizen*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2013.
- Harding, Vincent. *Hope and History*. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Press, 1990.
- Harris, Maria. *Teaching and Religious Imagination*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.
- Heifetz, Ronald; Grashow, Alexander; Linsky, Marty. *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*. Massachusett: Harvard Business Press, 1989.
- Henderson, A. Lee. *Your Church and You*. Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union/Legacy Publishing, 1989.
- Henry Matthew. *Concise Commentary on the Whole Bible*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishing, 2003.
- Herr, Kathryn; Garry L. Anderson. *The Action Research Dissertation: A Guide for Student and Faculty*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2015.
- Hill, McKay; & Ebrey, Buckler;. *A History of world Societies: Fifth edition Volume 1 to 1715*. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2000.
- Homer U. Ashby, Jr. *Our Home Is Over Jordan*. St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 2003.
- Jackson, M. *Transformative Learning for a New worldview: Learning to Think Differently*. New York: Pulgrave, 2008.
- James, F.C. *African Methodism in South Carolina*. Tappan, NY: Custombook, Ink, 1987.
- Jamieson, Robert; Fausset, A.R.; and Brown, David. *Commentary Critical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*. Hartford, CT: The S. S. Scranton Company, 1871
- Kibbey, Sue Nilson. *Ultimately Responsible*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2006.
- Kotter, John P. *The Leadership Factor*. New York: Free Press, 1988.
- Kouzes, J.M., & Posner, B. Z. *The Leadership challenge: How to get extraordinary things done in organizations*. San Frascico: Jossey-Bass, 1988.
- Larkin, Clarence. *Dispensational Truth of God's Plan and Purpose in the Ages*. Philadelphia, PA: Rev. Clarence Larkin. Est. Publishing, 1920.

- Lasor, William S; Hubbard, David A; Bush, Fredric A;. *The Message Form, and Background of the Old Testament: Old Testament Survey*. Grand Rapids, MN: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996.
- Layman, Charles, *Interpreters Concise Commentary. Volume 7, The Minor Prophets and the Apocrypha*. Nashville, TN. Abingdon Press, 1983.
- _____. *Interpreters Concise Commentary. Volume 3, Acts and Paul's Letters*. Nashville, TN. Abingdon Press, 1983.
- Lodger, J. *Transforming Moment*. New York: Helmers & Howard Publishers, 1989.
- Lofton, George A. *A Railway through the Word*. Nashville, TN: The Southwestern Company, 1908.
- Long, David. *Built to Lead: 7 Management R.E.W.A.R.D.S. Principles For Becoming A Top 10% Manager*. Next Century Publishing, 2014.
- Lovett H. Weems, Jr. *Church Leadership*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- Mckernan, James. *Curriculum Action Research 2nd Edition*. Oxon: Kogan Page Limited, 1996.
- McNeal, Reggie. *Practicing Greatness*. San Franscisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2006.
- Meizrow, J & Associates. *Learning as transformation: Critical Perspectives on a theory in progress*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2000.
- _____. *Transformative Dimensions of Adult Learning*. San Francisco: Jossy-Bass, 1991.
- Meizrow, J; Taylor, E; & Associates. *Transformational Learning in Practice: Insights from community. Workplace, and Higher Education*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009.
- Mekernan, James. *Curriculum Action Research*. Oxon, Oxford: Kogan Page, 1996.
- Melville, Herman. *Pierresloansloans, or The Ambiguities*. New York:Harper and Brothers Publishing, 1852.
- Nanus, Burt. *The Leaders Edge*. Chicago: Contemporary Books,4 1989.
- _____. *Visionary Leadership*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1992.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ & Culture*. New York, NY: HarperCollins Publishers, 1951.
- Orr, James. *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1939

- Pan, M.Ling. *Preparing Literature Reviews*. Los Angeles, CA: Pyczak Publishing, 2008.
- Payne, Daniel A. *A History of African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union/Legacy Publishing, 1998.
- _____. *History of African Methodist Episcopal Church*. Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union/Legacy Publishing, 1998.
- Payne, Daniel. *The American Negro: His History and Literature*. New York, NY: Arno Press and The New York Times, 1968.
- _____. *The American Negro: His History and Literature*. Nashville: AMEC Sunday School Union/Legacy Publishing, 1968.
- Pearce, C; Sims, H. *Shared Leadership: Toward a Multi-level theory of Leadership*. Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 2000.
- Peckham, Brain. *"The Vision of Habakkak" Catholic Biblical quarterly 48 to 40. 1986.*
<http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?> (accessed June 11, 2014).
- Pinn Anne H; Pinn, Anthony B. *Black Church History*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002.
- Pinn, Anthony B. *The Black church in the Post-Civil Rights Era*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002.
- Quinn, Robert E. *Deep Change: Discovering the Leader Within*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996.
- Ransom, Reverdy C. *Preface to History of A.M.E. Church*. Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union/Legacy Publishing, 1989.
- Roberts, J. Deotis. *Black Theology in Dialogue*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1987.
- Ronald Heifetz, Alexander Grashow, Marty Linsky. *The Practice of Adaptive Leadership*. Boston, Massachusetts: Harvard Business Press, 2009.
- Ruether, Rosemary Radford. *Sexism and God-Talk*. Boston, Massachusetts: Beacon Press, 1993.
- Ruether, Rosmary R. *Liberation Theology*. New York : Paulist Press, 1972.
- Sashkin, M. *The Visionary Leader: Leadership Behavior Questionnaire Trainer's Guide*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press, 1996.
- Schein, E.H. *Organizational Culture and Leadership* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1992.

- Schultz, John *Bible Commentary to Habakkuk*, (2003) http://www.bible-commentaries.com/source/johnschultz/BC_Habakkuk.PDF (Accessed March 23, 2016).
- Scofield, C. I. *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967,
- Sloan, Robert. “*What Does it Mean to Be a Hebrew of Hebrews?*”(2014) <https://robertbsloan.com/2014/07/02/momentum> (Accessed March 17, 2016).
- Strong, James. *The New Strong's Complete Dictionary of Bible Words*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1996.
- Taylor, W., Cranton, P. & Associates. *The handbook of transformative learning: Theory, research, and practice*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons, 2012.
- Theology of Work, “*Old Testament Introduction to the Prophets.*” Available from <http://www.theologyofwork.org/> Accessed March 12, 2016.
- Turner, Henry M. *Methodist Polity*. Nashville, TN: AMEC Sunday School Union, 1986.
- Walker, Clarence E. *A Rock in a Weary Land*. Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1982.
- Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus. *Leaders*. New York: Harper & Row, 1985.
- Weems, Lovett H. *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture, and Integrity*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993.
- West, Cornel. *Democracy Matters*. New York, NY: The Penguin Press, 2004.
- West, Cornell. *Prophecy and Deliverance: An African American Revolutionary Christianity*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1992.
- _____. *Prophesy Deliverance*. Louisville , KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002.
- Williams, Delores S. *Sister in the Wilderness: The Challenge of Womanist God Talk*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2005.
- Wimberly, Edward P. *Pastoral Care in the Black Church*. Nashville, TN: Parthenon Press, 1979.
- Wimbush, Vincent L. *Stoney The Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretations* . Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.
- Youngblood, Ronald. *Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, New and Enhanced Edition*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2014.

